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life. Such a life nurtures the qualities of the shepherd—courage, love of fighting, and contempt of hunger and hardship—rather than shapes the industrious character of the peasant.

IV

Nuer are also interested in their cattle for meat, boiled and roasted. They do not raise herds for slaughter, but sheep and oxen are frequently sacrificed at ceremonies. There are always ghosts and spirits in whose honour a sacrifice would at any time be appropriate, and such sacrifices are generally long overdue, so that there does not lack a proper excuse for a feast when people desire one. Fertile cows are sacrificed in mortuary rites, but, otherwise, only barren females are killed. At sacrifices most people are interested more in the festal than the religious character of the rites. Sometimes, as at marriage ceremonies, the people who perform the ritual are different from those who eat the meat, while at other ceremonies there is a general scramble for the carcass. Desire for meat is shown without shame on these occasions, and Nuer recognize that some men sacrifice without due cause. In some years it is a custom in the rains for young men to join together at a homestead with the purpose of slaughtering oxen and gorging themselves with meat. Except on such occasions, however, people ought not to kill an ox solely for food—it being even thought that the ox may curse them—and they only do so in severe famine. The Lou, who are rich in cattle, have a reputation, of which they are rather ashamed, for killing oxen for meat. Nevertheless, nowhere in Nuerland are cattle ordinarily slaughtered for food, and a man would never kill even a sheep or goat merely on the grounds that he desired meat. On occasions of minor importance sheep or goats are sacrificed rather than oxen, as they are less valuable.

Any animal which dies a natural death is eaten. Even when a youth's favourite ox dies he must be persuaded to partake of its flesh, and it is said that were he to refuse his spear might avenge the insult by cutting his foot or hand on some future occasion. Nuer are very fond of meat, and declare that on the death of a cow, 'The eyes and the heart are sad, but the teeth and the stomach are glad.' 'A man's stomach prays to God, independently of his mind, for such gifts.'

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Though oxen are sacrificed and eaten they are not valued only for these purposes, but also for display and for the prestige their possession confers. Colour and shape of horns are significant, but the essential qualities are bigness and fatness, it being considered especially important that the haunch bones should not be apparent. Nuer admire a large hump which wobbles when the animal walks, and to exaggerate this character they often manipulate the hump shortly after birth.

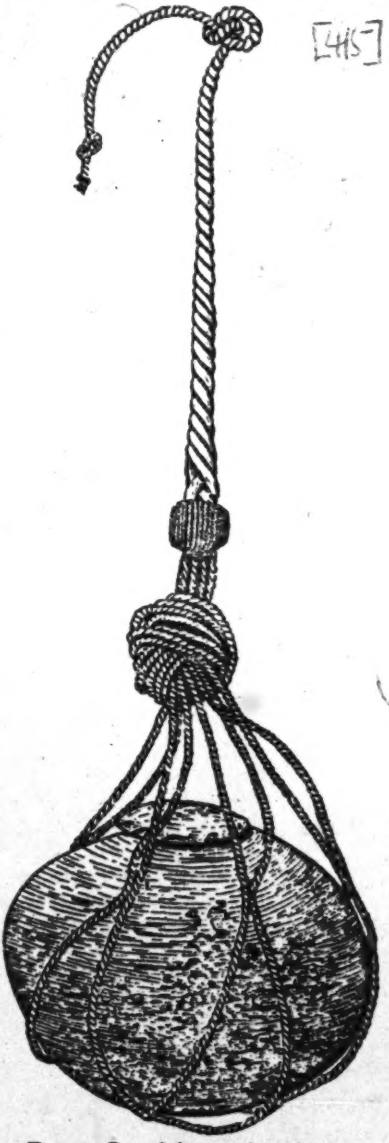

FIG. 2. Gourd for storing cheese.

Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle, and this is a supplementary article of diet in dry season camps, where one may generally see at least one cow bled each evening. Cows are bled for culinary purposes more frequently than oxen. The operation, called *bar*, consists of tying a cord tightly round a cow's neck so that the veins stand out and one of them can be stabbed, on the head side of the cord, with a small knife bound with cord or grass to prevent it entering too deeply. The blood spurts out, and when a large gourd has been filled they loosen the cord and it ceases to flow. Some dung is smeared over the wound. If one examines the neck of a cow one sees a row of small cicatrices. Cows appear to be a little giddy after the operation and may totter slightly, but otherwise seem none

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the worse for their experience. Indeed, it may well be, as Nuer assert, that they are the better for it, for they lead a sluggish life. The blood is boiled by women till it is fairly consistent and can be used as a meat flavouring with porridge; or the men let it stand till it coagulates into a solid block, and, after roasting it in the embers of a fire, cut it up and eat it.

Nuer do not regard the blood of cows as a staple article of diet and it does not play an important part in their cuisine. Indeed, they say that they do not perform the operation to acquire food, though they confess that roasted blood is delicious, but for the benefit of the cows. Bleeding is designed to cure a cow of any unfitness by letting out the bad blood of the sickness. Also, Nuer say, it makes the cow fat, for next day it will be more lively and graze avidly. Bleeding, moreover, in their opinion, decreases the desire of a cow to be served. Nuer say that if a cow is served too frequently it may eventually become barren, whereas, if it is bled now and again, it will only require to be served once and will be in calf. Cattle are sometimes bled for medical reasons in the rainy season, when people may be so replete that the blood is given to the boys of the kraal and to the dogs. Sometimes they make incisions in the noses of calves and let the blood flow to the ground in order to make them fat. I have seen Nuer scarify their own legs and the small of their backs to induce fleetness and strength.

The following two points seem to us to be significant. (1) Whilst Nuer normally do not kill their stock for food, the end of every beast is, in fact, the pot, so that they obtain sufficient meat to satisfy their craving and have no pressing need to hunt wild animals, an activity in which they engage little. (2) Except when epidemics are rife the usual occasions of eating meat are ritual and it is the festal character of rites which gives them much of their significance in the life of the people.

V

Apart from milk, meat, and blood, cattle furnish Nuer with numerous household necessities, and when we consider how few are their possessions we can appreciate the importance of cattle as raw material. The bodies and bodily products of cattle have the following uses:

Their skins are used for beds, trays, for carrying fuel (Plate XVII), cord for tethering and other purposes, flails (Fig. 15), leather collars for oxen (Fig. 4), and for the tympana of drums. They are employed in the manufacture of pipes, spears, shields,

[p. 29 contains no textual material]

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237 snuff-containers, &c. The scrota of bulls are made into bags to contain tobacco, spoons, and other small objects (Fig. 3). Tail-hairs are made into tassels used as dance ornaments by girls and to decorate the horns of favourite oxen (Plate IV). Their bones are used for the manufacture of armlets, and as beaters, pounders, and scrapers. Their horns are cut into spoons (Fig. 14) and are used in the construction of harpoons.

Their dung is used for fuel and for plastering walls, floors, and the outsides of straw huts in cattle camps. It is also employed as a plaster in minor technological processes and to protect wounds. The ashes of burnt dung are rubbed over mens' bodies, and are used to dye and straighten the hair, as a mouth wash and tooth powder, in the preparation of sleeping-skins and leather bags, and for various ritual purposes. Their urine is used in churning and cheese-making, in the preparation of gourd-utensils, for tanning leather, and for bathing face and hands.

The skins of sheep and goats are worn as loin garments by married women (Plate XXIII (*a*)), used as rugs to sit on, made into bags for storing tobacco and millet, and are cut into strips to be tied round their ankles by youths when dancing. Their dung and urine are not utilized.

231 237 The Bedouin Arab has been called the parasite of the camel. With some justice the Nuer might be called the parasite of the cow. It may, however, seem that the list we have compiled does not cover a very wide range of uses, but so simple is Nuer material culture that it accounts for a very considerable part of their technology and contains items on which they are highly dependent, e.g. the use of dung as fuel in a country where it is difficult to obtain sufficient vegetable fuel for cooking, let alone for the large fires that burn day and night in every byre and windscreen.

231 We have seen that apart from their many social uses Nuer are directly concerned with cattle as producers of two essential articles of diet, milk and meat. We now perceive that the economic value of cattle is more extensive. Taking into consideration also the more general social value of cattle, briefly indicated in Section I, we may already note that there is over-emphasis on a single object, which dominates all other interests and is consistent with those qualities of simplicity, single-mindedness, and conservatism, so characteristic of pastoral peoples.

[ZL ~ pp. 16-19, cat. 116 —Analyst]

PLATE IV

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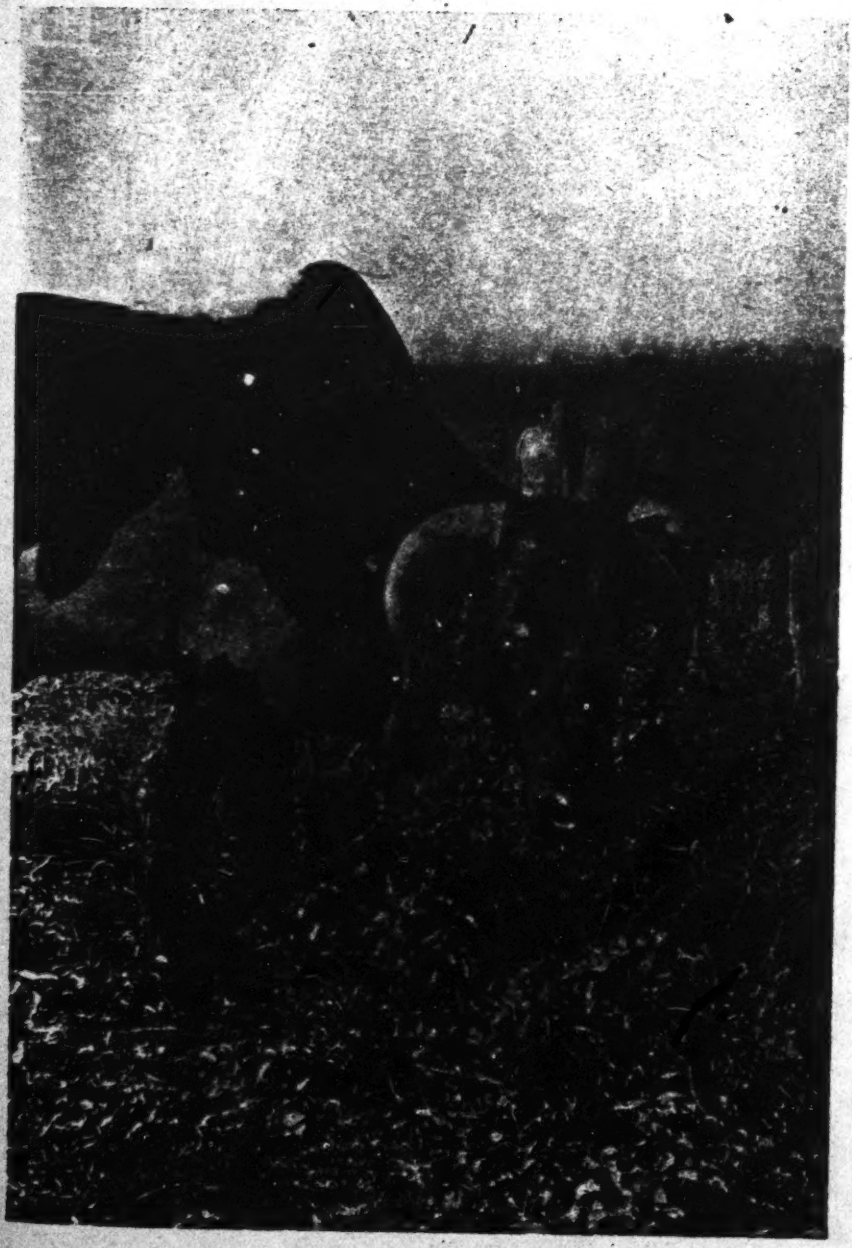

Ox with tassels hanging from its horns (Lou)

[Face p.30]

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this one source that Nuer attention, instead of being diffused in a variety of directions, tends, with undue exclusiveness, to be focused on this single object and to be introvertive, since the object has a certain identity with themselves. We will now examine briefly some linguistic material wherein we shall perceive further evidence of this hypertrophy of a single interest and of the identification of men with cattle to which I have alluded.

VIII

Linguistic profusion in particular departments of life is one of the signs by which one quickly judges the direction and strength of a people's interests. It is for that reason, rather than for its intrinsic importance, that we draw the reader's attention to the volume and variety of the Nuer cattle vocabulary. Like all the pastoral Nilotes they use an enormous number of words and phrases about cattle and the tasks of herding and dairy-work, and from this vast assortment we select for comment a single class: the terms by which they describe cattle, chiefly by reference to their colours.[1] These terms are more than a linguistic technique which enables Nuer to speak of cattle with precision in situations of practical husbandry and in the many social contexts in which they figure, for they establish associations on the one hand between wild creatures and cattle and on the other hand between cattle and their masters; they furnish certain ritual categories; and they greatly enrich the language of poetry.

In naming a Nuer cow one has to notice its colours and the way in which they are distributed on its body. When it is not of one colour the distribution of colours is the significant character by which one names it. There are ten principal colour terms: white (*bor*), black (*car*), brown (*lual*), chestnut (*dol*), tawny (*yan*), mouse-grey (*lou*), bay (*thiang*), sandy-grey (*lith*), blue and strawberry roan (*yil*), and chocolate (*gwir*). When a cow is of a single colour it is described by one of these terms. An animal may combine two or more colours, but a combination of more than two, known as *cuany*, is very rare. Normally there is a combination of white with one other colour and twelve common distributions of this com-

[1] I have recorded some information on this neglected subject among a neighbouring people in 'Imagery in Ngok Dinka Cattle-Names', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 1934.

[pp. 42-43 contain no textual material]

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1. *Jak* (brown or tawny)
Jok (other colours)

2. *Kue* (all colours)

3. *Gilkjak* (brown and tawny)
Kur (other colours)

4. *Kai* (brown and tawny)
Bil (other colours)

5. *Rol* (all colours)

6. *Par* (brown and tawny)
Riel (other colours)

FIG. 8. Diagrammatic representation of colour distributions.

[p. 42]

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FIG. 9. Diagrammatic representation of colour distributions.

[p. 43]

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23

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552

bination are shown in Figs. 8 and 9. There are, however, many more combinations, at least twenty-seven, one of the commonest being varieties of a striped or brindled coat (*nyang*).

In describing a beast one often denotes both the form of distribution and the colour that is combined with white. Thus an ox may be entirely mouse-grey (*lou*); have a mainly mouse-grey colour with a white face (*kwe looka*), white back (*har looka*), white splash on barrel (*bil looka*), white shoulder (*rol looka*), or white belly (*reng looka*): be brindled mouse-grey (*nyang looka*): be white with large mouse-grey patches (*rial looka*), medium mouse-grey patches (*kwac looka*), or a mouse-grey rump (*jok looka*), &c. There are at least a dozen terms describing different combinations of white and mouse-grey and there are a similar number of terms for a combination of white with each of the other colours. A further example is given to illustrate the wide range of variations: a white shoulder and foreleg (*rol*) may be found on a cow of any colour, e.g. *rol cara*, *rol yan*, *rol thiang*, *rol yili*, &c. There may also be a combination of one form of distribution with another and, in this case, the two combinations constitute the terms of reference and there is no need to denote the colouring that occurs in them, e.g. a white shoulder and foreleg (*rol*) may be combined with a white face (*kwe roal*), black spots (*rol kwac*), speckling (*rol cuor*), brown patches (*rol paara*), white back (*har roal*), white face and black ears (*kwr roal*), &c. There are at least twenty-five terms which include the *rol* distribution, and the other distributions likewise have wide ranges of combinations with colours and with one another.

As I shall elsewhere, and at length, analyse the principles of colour terminology and abstract the rules of nomenclature,[1] I need no more than remark here that it is evident from the few examples cited that there are several hundred colour permutations.

Some colours and combinations of colours are associated with animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, and this association is often indicated by secondary terms of reference and by ritual usages, e.g. *lou* (mouse-grey) is the bustard, *nyang* (striped) is the crocodile, *lith* (sandy-grey) is associated with *manlieth*, the grey kestrel, *thiang* (bay) is the tiang, *dwai* (brown with white stripes) is the female sitatunga, *kwe* (white-faced) is the fish eagle, *kwac* (spotted) is the leopard, *cuor* (speckled) is the vulture, *gwong* (spotted) is the guinea-fowl, *nyal* (brown-spotted) is the python, &c. These linguistic identifications and other colour associations lead to many

[1] 'Nuer Cattle Terms', to appear in *Sudan Notes and Records*.

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fanciful elaborations of nomenclature, e.g. a black ox may be called *ruai mim*, charcoal-burning or *won car*, dark clouds; a brown ox *riem dol*, red blood, or *rir dol*, red tree-cobra; a blue roan ox *bany yiel* after the blue heron; a mouse-grey ox *duk lou*, the shady gloom of forests, &c. These fancy names add greatly to the list of Nuer cattle terms.

Besides the vast vocabulary which refers to colours, distribution of colours, and colour associations, cattle can also be described by the shape of their horns and, as the horns of oxen are trained, there are at least six common designations in use besides several fancy names. Words denoting shape of horns add considerably to the number of permutations, for they can be combined with many of the colour and distribution terms, e.g. a sandy-grey cow with horns which almost meet in a curve above the head is a *duot lieth*, a shorthorn with *rial* markings is a *cot rial*, a brindled ox with one horn trained across its face is a *gut nyang*, &c. The ears of cattle, sheep, and goats are often cut in different shapes and it is permissible, and with sheep and goats usual, to describe them by reference to these incisions. Sheep and goats have very different mixtures of colours from those one finds among cattle, but the same terms can be used to cover all combinations, because they are never exact descriptions of colour dispositions but represent ideal distributions, to one or other of which any actual disposition approximates.

A further range of permutations is created by prefixes which denote the sex or age of an animal, e.g. *tut*, bull, *yang*, cow, *thak*, ox, *nac*, heifer, *ruath*, male calf, *dou*, female calf, *kol*, calf which has not yet begun to graze, and so forth. Thus one may speak of a *tut ma kar looka*, *dou ma rial*, *thak ma cuany*, &c. Indeed, if we were to count every possible mode of referring to animals of the flocks and herds they would be found to number several thousand expressions—an imposing and complicated system of ramifications which bears eloquent witness to the social value of cattle.

Furthermore, as we have mentioned, every man takes one of his names from the term by which one of his oxen is described, and these ox-names are the preferred salutations among agemates. A youth generally takes his first ox-name from the beast his father gives him at his initiation, but he may later

192 It is not necessary to add more examples of cattle-terms and
183 their uses to demonstrate that we are dealing with a galaxy of words in the arrangement of which a thesaurus of some magnitude might be compiled. I need only emphasize that this intricate and voluminous vocabulary is not technical and departmental but is employed by every one and in manifold situations of ordinary social life. I have only treated a fragment of a fragment of the linguistic field relating to cattle. I could enter into further detail, but, at best, I have only surveyed, and in an amateur way, that field, which invites broader and more specialist research. My purpose has been to draw attention to it and to show how a study of the dominant interest of Nuer might be approached from this angle. The subject is necessarily vast, because, as we have seen, it is not possible to discuss with Nuer their daily affairs, social connexions, ritual acts, or, indeed, any subject, without reference to cattle which are the core round which daily life is organized and the medium through which social and mystical relations are expressed. Nor is Nuer interest in cattle confined to their practical uses and social functions, but is displayed in their plastic and poetic arts, in which they are the chief theme. The over-emphasis on cattle is thus strikingly shown in language, which, moreover, by compelling reference to cattle, whatever be the subject of speech, continually focuses attention on them and makes them the superlative value of Nuer life.

IX

231 Another way in which Nuer engrossment in cattle can be
183 illustrated—our last exemplification thereof—is by noting how readily and frequently they fight about them, for people risk their lives for what they greatly value and in terms of those values.

183 At the present time cattle are the main cause of hostility
231 towards, and suspicion of, the Government, not so much on
721 account of present taxation as of earlier tax-gathering patrols
578 which were little more than cattle raids and of the avowedly plundering expeditions of the Egyptian Government era that preceded them. Nuer war with the Dinka has been almost entirely offensive and directed towards appropriation of herds and annexation of grazing grounds. Cattle have also been the

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chief occasion of strife among Nuer themselves. Indeed, after a successful raid on Dinka stock there is often further fighting over the booty. Moreover, Nuer tribes raid one another for cattle. Thus the Leek raid the Jikany, Rengyan, and other western tribes, and cattle raids are of common occurrence along tribal boundaries elsewhere, for to 'steal' (*kwal*) cattle from another tribe is regarded as laudable. Within a tribe, also, fighting frequently results from disputes about cattle between its sections and between individuals of the same section, even of the same village or homestead. Nuer fight on slight provocation and most willingly and frequently when a cow is at stake. On such an issue close kinsmen fight and homes are broken up. When ownership of cattle is in dispute Nuer throw over caution and propriety, showing themselves careless of odds, contemptuous of danger, and full of guile. As my Nuer servant once said to me: 'You can trust a Nuer with any amount of money, pounds and pounds and pounds, and go away for years and return and he will not have stolen it; but a single cow—that is a different matter.'

Nuer say that it is cattle that destroy people, for 'more people have died for the sake of a cow than for any other cause'. They have a story which tells how, when the beasts broke up their community and each went its own way and lived its own life, Man slew the mother of Cow and Buffalo. Buffalo said she would avenge her mother by attacking men in the bush, but Cow said that she would remain in the habitations of men and avenge her mother by causing endless disputes about debts, bride-wealth, and adultery, which would lead to fighting and deaths among the people. So this feud between Cow and Man has gone on from time immemorial, and day by day Cow avenges the death of her mother by occasioning the death of men. Hence Nuer say of their cattle, 'They will be finished together with mankind', for men will all die on account of cattle and they and cattle will cease together.

It must not, however, be supposed that Nuer live in continuous turmoil: the very fact that they are prepared to resist any infringement of their rights in cattle induces prudence in the relations between persons who regard themselves as members of the same group. It may be said, furthermore, that the great

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vulnerability of cattle coupled with the extensive living-space required for them are compatible only with a far recognition of conventions in the settlement of disputes, or, in other words, the existence of a tribal organization embracing a large territory, and of some feeling of community over yet larger areas.

Fighting about ownership of cattle and seizing cattle for what are claimed as debts and compensation for losses are of a somewhat different order to raiding for cattle over which no rights, other than the power of the strong, are asserted. War against foreign peoples, as distinct from warfare within a tribe, is almost entirely for plunder. Nuer war against the Dinka, therefore, differs from most primitive warfare in that its primary object is acquisition of wealth, for cattle are a form of wealth that not only lasts a long time and reproduces itself, but is, also, easily seized and transported. Furthermore, it enables invaders to live on the country without commissariat. Crops and dwellings can be destroyed, but cattle can be confiscated and taken home. This quality, which has given pastoral peoples a bias in favour of the arts of war rather than the arts of peace, has meant that the Nuer are not entirely dependent on their own cattle, but can augment their herds and restore the ravages of rinderpest, and have, in fact, for a long time increased their stock, and hence supplemented their food-supply, by raiding; a condition that has shaped their character, economy, and political structure. Skill and courage in fighting are reckoned the highest virtues, raiding the most noble, as well as the most profitable, occupation, and some measure of political agreement and unity a necessity.

We hasten to add that an explanation of warfare between Nuer and Dinka by reference to cattle and pastures alone is too simple a reduction. Hostility is expressed in terms of cattle, and desire for cattle accounts for some peculiarities of the struggle and some characteristics of the political organizations involved in it, but the struggle itself can only be fully understood as a structural process and we present it as such later.

We now pass to a brief examination of the oecological system of which Nuer and their cattle form part to discover the conditions in which cattle-husbandry is practised and how far its practice in a certain environment influences political structure.

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342 573 are simply constructed, the roots of grasses, or occasionally stems of millet, being tightly packed in a narrow trench to make windscreens, and the tops of the grasses being bound together and plastered with dung on the outside to make huts (Plates XV (*a*), XIX (*a*), and XXI (*b*)). The whole space within a windscreen is occupied by a hearth of ashes on which the men sleep around a fire, and the openings face the kraal. If people do not intend to spend more than a few days at a site they often sleep in the open and do not trouble to erect windscreens and huts. These light dwellings can be erected in a few hours.

IV

221 136 231 Another circumstance that determines Nuer movements is the abundance of insect life, which is an ever-present menace, for the cattle get little rest from stinging flies and ticks from morn till nightfall and would be worried to death if their masters did not give them some protection.

136 231 372 Mosquitoes swarm in the rains, their ravages being terrible from July to September, when, as soon as the sun sets, men and beasts have to take refuge in huts and byres. The doors of the huts are tightly closed, the air-holes blocked, and fires lit. In the centre of the byres, which house the cattle, burn large dung fires which fill them with smoke so dense that one cannot even see the cattle. Young men sleep on platforms above the fires, and if the smoke clears—the doors are shut, but it escapes through the thatched roof—they descend to pile on more fuel. By this means the beasts are enabled to obtain some rest at night. At the end of the rains while the cattle are still in the villages they are left in the kraals till their masters go to bed, when they are shut in the byres to protect them from lions. Fires are not made up so high at this season, for mosquitoes are less troublesome, since there is no surface water, the millet has been cut, and the grasses are close-cropped. Later those men who remain in the villages, while the others go into camps, often erect windscreens in the kraals and spend the night outside with any cows which have been left behind. In the dry season mosquitoes are absent except near pools and marshes, and even in the vicinity of water they are not troublesome from January to May, so that the herds can sleep in the open. Nevertheless,

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they are surrounded by windscreens in which their masters sleep at the side of dung fires from which smoke rises on every side to envelop the camp.

Another unpleasant pest is the seroot fly. It appears to be seasonal, flourishing on cloudy days from May to July, though it sometimes appears at other times of the year. The seroot attack the cattle in the mornings and accompany them to pastures, where they bite them so effectively that they are often driven, stained with blood, back to camp, where dung fires are lit to give them protection. On such days the cattle are unable to graze, fitfully, for more than two or three hours. Another biting fly, the *stomoxys*, is prevalent throughout the year, being especially conspicuous in the dry season and early rains. It is probably this fly which is responsible for the presence of trypanosomiasis in parts of Nuerland, especially among the Eastern Jikany, by transmitting the trypanosomes directly on its proboscis from beast to beast, for the tsetse does not occur in Nuerland, except, perhaps, on its eastern extremities, though its lethal character is well known to Nuer. There are other insects which annoy the cattle, but it is not known whether any of them carry disease in this latitude. Of these may be mentioned the eight-legged cattle tick, which Nuer remove from the bodies of their animals when they return to camp in the evenings—though not frequently or systematically enough; an insect called *tharkwac* which is said to live on the bodies of cattle, though its bites do not cause bleeding; a fly called *miek*; and the common black fly, like our house fly in appearance, which worries the herds a good deal in hot weather—damp and cold seem to kill it off. Red soldier ants occasionally infest the byres so that the cattle have to be removed while the floors are sprinkled with ashes, but they are rare in Nuerland. Nuer are helpless against most of these insects, though, no doubt, smoke keeps them away to some extent.

Speaking from personal experience I may say that one is continuously tormented by insects in Nuerland, especially by the common black fly and the mosquito. It is evident that the cattle suffer considerably from their attentions and there can be little doubt that this constant irritation lowers their vitality and affects their milk yield, for they seldom have any real rest. In the circumstances their hardiness and endurance are remarkable.

Since several species of tsetse in the Southern Sudan carry trypanosomes pathogenic to cattle it is fortunate for the Nuer that they do not occur in his country. This immunity is

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231 undoubtedly due to the absence of shady forest which, in its turn, is probably due in the main to flooding and partly to firing. The prevalence of tsetse in the forest belt that stretches along the foot-hills of the Ethiopian escarpment has prevented the Nuer from expanding as far eastwards as they might have done, for it is clear that one of the reasons for their evacuation of Anuakland was the loss of stock. In relation to tsetse the Nuer, in their present territory, occupy a more favourable position than most Southern Sudan peoples.

A further consideration of great importance is the presence of many microscopic organisms that cause disease in men and cattle. This is not a subject about which we can say much. With regard to stock it may, however, be said that it suffers from many different diseases and that Nuer usually have some treatment for them, though it may be doubted whether it has much, if any, therapeutic value. The two most serious contagious diseases are bovine pleuro-pneumonia, which in some years causes heavy mortality among the herds, and rinderpest. Rinderpest entered the Sudan not more than fifty years ago and Nuer refer to the period before it came, along with Arab invaders, at the time the Boiloc age-set was being initiated, as 'the life of the cattle'. They have no way of combating the scourge once it has attacked a herd, but they are aware that an infected herd ought to be isolated. They are so used to it now that they generally take the precaution of splitting up their herd in the dry season, when it is prevalent, and placing beasts in widely separated camps, so that if it breaks out in any part of the country the cattle placed in another part may escape. An animal which recovers from the disease is known to be immune from further attacks and its value is thereby enhanced, though Nuer are aware that its calves will not enjoy the same immunity. Miss Soule tells me that Nuer claim to be able to tell if an animal has had rinderpest by scraping the tip of the horns and noting the colour beneath the surface. If it is white the animal is immune. Though threatened with starvation in the years of its visitation Nuer face the scourge with resignation and detachment.

136
231
178 Rinderpest has caused and continues to cause terrible havoc in the herds. It cannot exactly be estimated what, and how

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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extensive, have been the social changes which have resulted from this disturbance of the oecological equilibrium. Since bride-wealth consists of cattle there must have been for a time considerable dislocation of marriage arrangements, but stability has been reached to-day by lowering the number of cattle which have to be paid. A like assessment on a new footing does not seem to have been achieved in homicide negotiations, in which there is not the same goodwill between the parties as in marriage, and blood-wealth appears to have been claimed up to the present time at the old rate of payment, though Nuer recognize that bride-wealth and blood-wealth should rise and fall together. One cannot make any precise statement on the matter, but it is likely that feuds were less easily concluded than before and that consequently tribal relations were affected. It may also be supposed that decrease in stock has led to a general deterioration of the standard of living, for climatic conditions do not allow adequate compensation by expending further labour on horticulture. No doubt Nuer grew more millet than before, but they must have suffered a decrease in their total food-supply and, above all, in security. It will be seen in a later section that Nuer can no more exist on a purely horticultural economy than they can, at any rate since the introduction of rinderpest, exist on a purely pastoral economy. They must have a mixed economy and can compensate on one side or the other only to a very limited degree. Nuer sought to repair their losses rather by extensive raiding of their Dinka neighbours, passing on to them their own losses in stock. We know that Nuer raided Dinka before rinderpest entered the country, but it is likely that their foreign relations have been affected by the greater stimulus to aggression. Other probable effects could be noted, especially in kinship relations, but one can only guess their importance, so we confine our speculations to a few of those that may be supposed to have occurred in Nuer economy and political life.

V

It was noted in Chapter I that to exist Nuer have to make use of a mixed economy, since their herds do not supply them with adequate nourishment. It will be seen in a later section that their millet harvest is often meagre and uncertain. Fish,

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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often received some such reply as: 'Oh well, such is our custom. We have cattle.'

I wish to emphasize, in conclusion, the following points: (1) that Nuer cultivate only enough grain for it to be one element in their food-supply and not enough to live on it alone; (2) that with their present climate and technology considerable increase in horticulture would be unprofitable; and (3) that the dominance of the pastoral value over horticultural interests is in accord with oecological relations which favour cattle husbandry at the expense of horticulture. Nuer values and oecological relations, therefore, combine to maintain the bias towards cattle husbandry, in spite of rinderpest having rendered it a more precarious occupation than hitherto.

IX

It has been mentioned that Nuer must have a mixed economy in the given oecological relations because no one source of food is sufficient to keep them alive, and that the dominant food-producing activity at each season is determined by the oecological cycle. The different elements of diet, therefore, have an oecologically determined relation to one another and these relations can be roughly plotted.

Milk foods, millet in the form of porridge and beer, a little maize, fish, and meat, are the main items of Nuer diet. Milk is a staple food all the year round, though cows probably tend to give a smaller yield towards the end of the rains owing to insufficiency of pasturage, and it is said that there is a tendency for them to calve in numbers after the first harvest and therefore to cease lactating a few weeks earlier—if this is correct it is possibly due to the hot weather in February and March bringing the cows on heat. This seasonal tendency and the respective contributions of cattle and millet to Nuer food-supply are brought out in a story in which Cow and Millet have a dispute. Cow says that Millet is a person of no importance and that it is her milk that keeps people alive throughout the year, while in time of famine they can eat her flesh and live. Millet replies that Cow's claims are doubtless just, but that when she is ripe the children are glad, for they chew the sweet stems and rub out the grain between their hands and eat it,

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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554 pass them by because sacred powers often give a man prestige from which he may attain local eminence as an important elder, if they are combined with wealth, ability, and wide kinship connexions.

554 613 231 791 Next to prophets and leopard-skin chiefs the ritual status that carries with it most prestige is that of the *wut ghok*, the Man of the Cattle. Certain lineages have hereditary ritual powers in relation to cattle and are asked to cure sick beasts and to make barren cows fruitful, though only some members of these lineages use their powers. Like leopard-skin chiefs, Men of the Cattle are often members of stranger lineages and not of the aristocratic clan of their tribe. I was told that their curse is feared, as it can be directed to the cattle, and that Nuer do not care to offend them, but, outside tradition, I have not recorded any occasion of its utterance. Apart from the few Men of the Cattle who play a part in the regulation of Age-sets (see Chap. VI), and those who are sometimes consulted about migration to new pastures, they have no public functions. One *wut ghok* of the Eastern Gaajok became very rich and powerful a generation ago, but his prestige was largely due to his possession of magic.

554 613 791 Besides the *kuaa muon*, who has a ritual relationship to the earth, and the *wut ghok*, who has a ritual relationship to the cattle, there are a number of totemic specialists whose ritual connexion with lions, crocodiles, weaver birds, &c., enables them to influence the behaviour of these creatures. A totemic specialist is a possessor (*gwan*) of the spirit (*kwoth*) of his totem. Totemic specialists have no political significance and have no social influence in virtue of their powers alone. There is a war specialist whose duty it is to shake a spear in the face of the enemy and to deliver an invocation against them. He is known as *gwan muot*, possessor of the spear, or *ngul*, and is often, perhaps always, a member of a senior lineage of the dominant clan of the tribe, for he invokes the spear by the spear-name of the clan. There are also magicians of various kinds: leeches, diviners, owners of medicines, and owners of fetishes. Of these specialists only owners of fetishes become prominent members of their communities on account of their ritual powers. Nuer [776] are very much afraid of fetish spirits and believe them to be so powerful that they will even purchase them with cattle. A fetish-owner may become the most influential man in the village, and I have been surprised at the respect and fear with which his neighbours sometimes treat him. Nevertheless, he has no defined authority in controlling the relations of the villagers to one another nor does he represent the village in its relations with neighbouring communities.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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PLATE XX

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Cattle travelling (Lou)

[Face p. 186]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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792 earth. They state that in the old days there were no prophets; only the ritual officials mentioned earlier. The records of European travellers are not explicit enough to confirm or reject this statement. Poncet says that among the Nuer in his day were rich and important persons, honoured after their death, whom he calls *devins ou sorciers* and *jongleurs*,[1] and Brun-Rollet says that the Nuer had a kind of pope for whom they had veneration akin to worship, but his account is too fanciful to carry weight.[2] Whilst it is difficult to believe that there were

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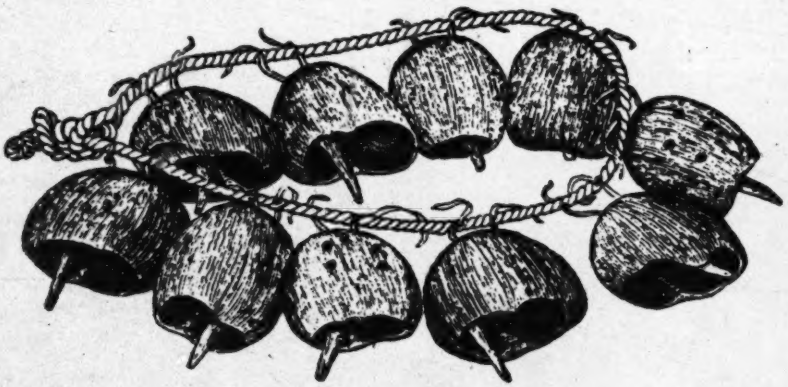

FIG. 13. Calf's bell-necklace of palm nuts.

no cases of possession sixty years ago we must, in the absence of conflicting evidence, accept so unanimous a declaration by Nuer that there was no possession by Sky-gods, and it seems fairly certain that if there were any prophets at that time their influence was restricted to small localities and had not the tribal [177] significance of more recent times. There is some evidence that the development of Nuer prophets was related to the spread of Mahdism from the Northern Sudan. However that may be, there is no doubt that powerful prophets arose about the time when Arab intrusion into Nuerland was at its height and that after the reconquest of the Sudan they were more respected and had more influence than any other persons in Nuerland.

792 Nevertheless, we consider that the power of these prophets,
619 even of the most successful ones, has been exaggerated and that

[1] Poncet, op. cit., p. 40. [2] Brun-Rollet, op. cit., p. 222.

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931,1936) 1951
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his maternal uncle—generally it would be the mother's uterine brother—for a bull-calf with the markings of the new ox-name he has taken. Though he cannot demand it as a right, he may curse his uncle's herd so that the male calves die if he is refused his request. It seems that the customary way of making this request is for the nephew to make an incision on the ear of the calf he desires. A man may not bury his maternal uncle, and I believe that a mother's brother should not bury his sister's son. Were a man to bury his maternal uncle he would die of *keth nara*, a disease which is said to cause white patches on the skin. The same disease may attack a man who hears that his maternal uncle has been wounded or cut himself severely and does not visit him and place some of the blood on his foot. Should the nephew not hear of the uncle's wound and contract the disease, he visits him and gets him to rub soot from the bottom of a pot on the affected surfaces. A man and his maternal uncle may not tether their cattle together in the same kraal, though the cattle may graze together. If one of the uncle's beasts dies the nephew may not skin it, for were he to do so he would destroy the uncle's herd and people would say that 'he had spilt the cattle of his uncle to the ground'. An uncle may not give his sister's son a spear-shaft, for the gift might cause him serious injury. A man and his sister's son must not use the same sleeping-hide or sleep in the same hut. These rules, especially those which forbid a man tethering his cattle in his uncle's kraal, skinning his uncle's beasts, and sleeping in the same hut as his uncle, seem almost designed to keep the two apart, to prevent a youth identifying himself with his maternal kin instead of with his paternal kin.

The maternal uncle is the kinsman who most often blesses a lad in the Nuer way of blessing, by spitting on the head. Grandparents may sometimes do this, but other relatives rarely. If a man comes frequently to visit his sister and partakes of her hospitality and does not occasionally spit on her child's head, the child may get the disease I have mentioned above. It is also said that when a maternal uncle rises during the day from a nap in the ashes of the hearth and his sister's son rubs the ashes off his back he must then spit on the lad's head. But if the blessing of a maternal uncle is desired, his curse is believed to be among the worst, if not the worst, a Nuer can receive, for, unlike the father, a maternal uncle may curse a youth's cattle, as well as his crops

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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Photo: Dr. J. F. Blos:

LAK NUER AND HIS SONG-BULL

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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128 A general index is included, but for easy reference a detailed list of contents is given at the beginning.

128 104 For the sake of consistency I have, with few exceptions, followed the orthography adopted by Professor Evans-Pritchard. The full range of phonetic symbols has not been used, but the Nilotic *ch* or *sh* sound is rendered as *c*—a common convention even in administrative documents—and *gh* stands for the phonetic ɣ. Other forms of spelling are taken from *A Nuer-English Dictionary*, by Fr. J. Kiggen. After initial explanation, I have often had to employ Nuer terms in later passages without further definition simply because such terms have a complicated meaning for which there is no succinct English translation. To assist the reader a glossary of these terms is included among the appendixes.

Note on Cattle Terminology

231 104 Nuer law is principally concerned with rights and claims in cattle, and it will be as well, even at this early stage, to give some description of Nuer cattle terms. Cattle are referred to generally as *ghok*. The *ghok thunge*—the indemnity paid to a dead man's kin by his slayer—simply means the 'cattle of compensation', the *ghok gwande* are the 'father's cattle', i.e. the father's portion of bridewealth. A single cow is *yang*, though *yang* is often used indiscriminately to describe all sizes of female cattle. A heifer is specifically *nac*, a young female animal which has not yet calved, but may be expected to do so in the near future. A smaller female calf is *dou*. An entire bull is *tut*, the stud bull being referred to as *tut wec*, 'the bull of the herd'. An ox is *thak* if it is full-grown, all other bull-calves being *ruath*. [435] Cattle obviously have their relative value according to sex and size. A full-grown ox (*thak*) is often said to be worth a cow-calf (*dou*); a pregnant heifer (*nac me liac*) or a pregnant cow (*yang me liac*) is clearly worth more than a similar animal which is not in calf. A barren cow (*yang me but*) is useless except for meat or sacrifice but is often considered the equivalent of a medium size ox.

[584] Conventional claims or rights (*cuong*) are usually specified: for example, the *yang kwoth gwande*, 'the cow of the father's spirit', is one specific item included in the *ghok gwande*, the bride's father's portion of her bridewealth. This is a single animal. The *yang gwande*, another item in the father's portion, however, is usually a cow and its calf, though when referring to the claim, the calf may not be specifically mentioned. At the same time these terms may be subject to agreement between the two parties concerned and not to a strict legal interpretation. Thus, though he may point out that the *yang gwande* should consist of a cow and calf, a father may well be prepared to accept something less than this.

In giving judgement, a Nuer court will almost always specify the

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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In giving judgement, a Nuer court will almost always specify the size and sex of the animal to be paid by the defendant. This is especially the case when the defendant is unable to pay immediately, for otherwise he will be expected to name and describe the exact animal he proposes to pay.

In most cases the nature of the claim will be clear to the reader from the context. The administrator who is concerned with the practical application of Nuer law will be wise to master these terms at the outset. The terms are also set out for easy reference in the Glossary at the end of this book.

2. AN INTRODUCTION TO NUER SOCIETY

Origin and History

The Nuer call themselves *Naadh*,[1] which simply means 'people', '*kon nei te Naadh*', 'we are the people of the People', an expression which is sufficiently descriptive for their own purposes and reveals their arrogant belief in their own superiority over other human beings. By other tribes they are often spoken of as Nuer, and to be explicit to the ignorant stranger they will sometimes say '*kon Nuere*', 'we are Nuer'. Their origin remains obscure. Nuer themselves merely say that their ancestors descended from the sky down a convenient rope or by means of an exceptionally large *akot* (*Ficus*) tree which still grows in Jagei country in the centre of Western Nuer District, an area from which they all came. Other theories of their origin seem to me no less conjectural and in the absence of more convincing evidence, we may as well leave it at that.[2] Culturally they are very near to the Dinka, and the two languages have close affinities. They are clearly of the same stock, but it remains a mystery why the Nuer should have emerged as a separate people with comparative suddenness about the beginning of the nineteenth century, driven the Dinka out of so much of their country, seized so many of their women and cattle, and absorbed whole sections of Dinka into their own society. Their extraordinary vitality, expressed in a peculiar vivacity of speech, in physical courage and endurance, their arrogance and democratic outlook coupled with a most engaging sense of humour, make them outstanding among the peoples of the Sudan.

They are divided into a number of 'tribes', the tribe being the largest group which in the past had any real and permanent sense of corporate unity. Each tribe is further divided into segments and sub-segments, each occupying a common territory with a common name. Administratively they are now divided into three Districts: Western

[1] Sometimes spelt *Nath*.

[2] See Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, p. 3. Fr. J. P. Crazzolara's two recent books on *The Lwoo* (Missioni Africane, Verona, 1950–51) do not provide much further information on Nuer origins.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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a greater or lesser extent isolated at certain times of the year. Such periodic isolation is one of the factors which tend to emphasize the distinction between social groups and strengthen the ties within them, for the people are compelled by territorial proximity to conform to an accepted pattern of behaviour. During the dry season, movements in the pasture areas are comparatively easy, but camps may be far apart and communications therefore tedious. The majority of people from a local community who occupy the same permanent settlement during the rains, tend to join together in the cattle-camps, and their relationship is therefore constant throughout the year. This is not, however, always the case, for people of different descent-groups, normally living together and assisting one another during the season of cultivation, may split up and join different cattle-camps during the summer. The way in which people join together and concentrate during the dry season is usually determined by kinship ties, or ties arising from common residence in the permanent settlements, though it need not be so. For example, the Lak Nuer are sometimes forced to move their cattle into Gaawar grazing areas because their own are insufficient to meet their needs in certain years. They do so by agreement with the Gaawar and graze their cattle there on sufferance. A closer analysis of the relations of Lak with Gaawar will usually show that some form of kinship relationship exists, or at least a relationship through intermarriage between the individual units concerned.

Climatic conditions adverse to the cultivation of millet coupled with widespread cattle disease (rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, trypanosomiasis, &c.) make life extremely precarious. Nuer like to claim that a mixed economy is forced upon them, and that they would scarcely bother to cultivate at all if their cattle were sufficient. This is, I think, largely an ideal. Cattle, though subject to disease, provide a measure of security in an environment where poor drainage and erratic rainfall distribution make crop-production a most risky enterprise and famine a common event. They might well cultivate more energetically if the processes of agriculture were not so laborious and their efforts so often of little avail.

Small quantities of maize are planted in the early rains and the crop matures, if they are lucky, about the end of July, providing temporary relief until the first crop of millet is available. This crop matures a few weeks later, while a second crop is harvested in November or December and sometimes as late as January. During this period the rains may be favourable to both crops and the Nuer are well supplied. In most years, however, one or the other crop fails and in the worst years the early crop is late in starting owing to lack of rain only to be ruined by torrential downpours when it is reaching maturity, while the second crop is often destroyed by floods. In such circumstances the Nuer are short of food, and two unsuccessful years mean

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

PART I

MARRIAGE AND MARRIAGE LAWS

1. INTRODUCTION

The Functions of Bridewealth

THE majority of legal disputes which are brought before a Nuer court concern marriage relationships, matters arising out of marriage, claims to a share in bridewealth cattle or a return of bridewealth cattle if the marriage is dissolved. Cattle provide a legal symbol which runs through the whole structure of kinship and marital relationships. A thorough understanding of marriage, the bridewealth system, and rights in cattle raised by kinship is essential to a study of customary law administered in the courts.

The test of legality in all Nuer marriages is found in the transference of bridewealth cattle from the bridegroom and his kinship group on the one hand, to the legal parent or guardian of the bride and his kinship group on the other. The main functions of bridewealth are as follows:

(i) It supplies a material symbol which legalizes the union of man and woman and establishes the legitimacy of the children of the union and their lawful inheritance.

(ii) It gives emphasis and legality to the conventions and patterns of behaviour and the reciprocal obligations which are raised between the kinship groups concerned and must be observed if the union is to be successful.

(iii) It gives stability to the union, particularly in the initial stages when it has not been confirmed and fortified by the birth of children who will subsequently form a link between the lineages concerned.

(iv) To some extent it stands as security for the good behaviour of the wife in her new home and for the observance of her marital duties towards her husband and his kin. It will be in the interests of her kinsmen to encourage her in this matter because her husband can demand his cattle back and dissolve the union. In this they may sustain no loss since the woman can be married again, but it will certainly cause them inconvenience, especially if the bridewealth

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8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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admitted this claim in the presence of his relatives-in-law. Certain points should be noted: 583

(i) Dhor died without issue and his brother Tut married Nyanial as Dhor's 'ghost-wife'. Tut therefore receives the *yang dieth* and *yang pithe* as *genitor* and foster-father of the bride and also a calf as *gwanlen mande*.

(ii) Mut Dhor receives the father's portion as Dhor's heir.

(iii) All *nangnen* cattle have been paid, though Thiep and Nyakong were both dead long before Nyalam was born.

(iv) Thiep Toi receives a cow (*gwanlen mande*) though one would expect this to go to Kolang or Tut. The explanation was that the latter had benefited in excess of their rights on the marriage of Nyabwogh, Thiep's daughter. Thiep and Dung might also be expected to get the *gwanlen gwande* portions, but did not do so for the same reason.

(v) Ngwoiny (on the maternal side) had a second wife, but she died without issue. Hence there are no *nar gwande*, and Mut and Kun receive these cattle as well as the *nangnen gwande* (*gwandong*).[1]

Number of Cattle Paid Today

Professor Evans-Pritchard points out that—

there is good reason to suppose that till thirty to forty years ago cattle were so plentiful in Nuerland that bridewealth was paid at the ideal rate of 40 head. Of recent years the herds have diminished through rinderpest, and the traditional means of recuperation, raids on Dinka stock, has been checked by the presence of the Anglo-Egyptian government. Diminution has been fairly uniform throughout the whole of Nuerland and it would to-day in all parts be impossible for a man to raise as many as 40 head of cattle for marriage. The usual payment is from 20 to 30.[2] 583 231

To rinderpest must be added the ravages of trypanosomiasis, a disease which appears to have increased during the last decade owing to mechanical transmission through other biting flies rather than tsetse. We must also bear in mind that the human population may have been less in those days, for although there are no statistical records available to work on, there are indications that the Nuer are increasing. Some tribes are, however, poorer in cattle than others,[3] and bridewealth payments are not everywhere the same. It would probably be unsafe to state an average figure anywhere without an analysis of a very large number of marriages. Some marriages are referred to by the Nuer as *kwen me keagh*. This expression, which is a contradiction in terms, is used very loosely in this context for a literal translation would imply that they are illegal.[4] What is meant is that the number of cattle paid is much less than normal even by present-day standards, but it should be noted that marriages made in these circumstances 583

[1] Mut stated that as he and Kun had received many cattle which in normal circumstances would have gone to a half-brother, they proposed to marry a 'ghost-wife' to their father Ngwoiny. Mut would do so. (see 'Ghost-Marriage and Bridewealth', pp. 76–8).

[2] Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 154.

[3] See Appendix I.

[4] For the various meanings of *keagh*, see pp. 82, 131, 191, n. 1.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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000 organization can be maintained, and in so far as Nuer courts operate today they are in fact a means by which it is maintained.

231 581 583 The multiple factors and circumstances which have bearing on a dispute over cattle cannot be summarized, but if the principles are understood it is easy enough to see the issues. Cattle provide the key to status within the kinship group and between two kinship groups when marital relationship is established. The payment of bridewealth cattle determines the legality of the union, and if this is not done, the legitimacy of the children can be made valid by the payment of fees in cattle. Disputes often arise over such matters, but it is rarely the legal aspect which is denied; it is rather that certain persons refuse to honour their legal obligations, and the court then enforces the law. As we shall see in the next part of this chapter, other cases arise over the return of bridewealth cattle in divorce and the dissolution of marriage, over the non-fulfilment of the obligations of kinship in the distribution of cattle, and from claims on the bridewealth of daughters, both by the mother's and the father's kinsmen. Disputes also arise over wrongs committed, violations of rights established in legal marriage, and the legitimization of children. Whether, in the settlement of the dispute before the court, the legal principles can be accurately and rigidly applied, depends on the circumstances. The law is not sufficiently exact to cover all situations.

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428 601 hut (*dwiel*). They are half-brothers and half-sisters to the children of another wife of their father; these are *kwi luak* because the *luak* or cattle-byre is common to all, as is their father. The *kwi dwiel—kwi luak* distinction is also brought out in other terms of speech, as we have already seen; those who are *kwi dwiel* are *kwi man* or *mande* ('of the mother'), those who are *kwi luak* are *kwi gwan* or *gwande* ('of the father'). In normal speech these distinctions are not used because the context does not demand a distinction. A man's paternal uncle is referred to as *gwanlen*, whether he is a full or uterine brother of the man's father or a half-brother. A distinction is, however, demanded in matters of bridewealth distribution and inheritance. He is *gwanlen kwi luak* or *gwanlen kwi gwan* and so on. The first principle, therefore, of bridewealth distribution and the inheritance thereof is that there should be an equitable distribution on both sides of a family group described above. We have seen that each of the persons standing in a particular and accurately described relationship to the bride has a title to a portion of the bridewealth according to an ideal. This, however, concerns direct and contemporary claims. It becomes a matter of inheritance when the actual claimant is dead.

If the claimant is a male, the heirs to his title may be any one of his sons, though in bridewealth there is always a tendency to say that his sons by a woman who is not the mother of the bride should inherit in these circumstances. These are in fact half-brothers of the bride, and the system is one of mutual alternation, since the bride's uterine brothers already have a special portion and will expect in return to benefit on the marriage of the half-brothers' uterine sisters. Moreover the paternal grandfather's portion (*mangnen kwi gwan*) should always go to his son born of another wife and not to the son of the bride's paternal grandmother. This rule is applied with considerable exactitude unless no such person exists. If the claimant is a female, then her portion should always go to one of her own sons. For example, the paternal grandmother's portion (*mangnen kwi man*) goes to her own sons (other than the bride's father), i.e. one of the paternal uncles of the bride who are classified as *gwanlen kwi dwiel* or *kwi man*. Similarly, the bride's mother's portion should go to her own sons, i.e. the bride's uterine brothers.

428 601 231 These distinctions concern the different domestic units of a family group and of a minimal lineage, and govern the distribution and inheritance of claims on both the paternal and maternal sides. There are also indications within a single domestic unit as to which of the brothers should receive a particular cow. Thus, for example, the paternal grandmother's portion (*mangnen kwi man*) is said to be the right of her younger or youngest son (either the *dar*, *joah* or *pegh*). Similarly the cow called *puong* of the father's portion should go to his youngest son, i.e. the bride's youngest half-brother.

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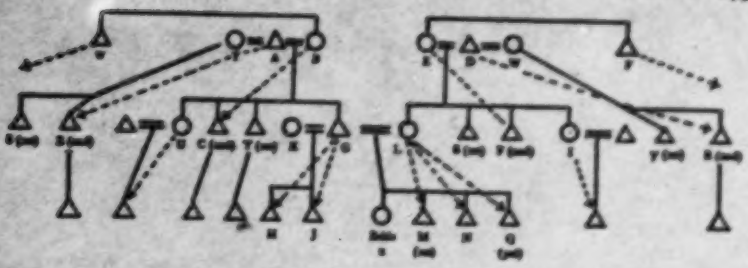

Conventional Indications Bridewealth Portions

Gwandong	(paternal grandfather)	A	his younger son by Y	=Z
Mandong	(paternal grandmother)	B	her younger son by A	=C
Gwandong	(maternal grandfather)	D	his younger son by W	=R
Mandong	(maternal grandmother)	E	her younger son by D	=F
Gwan	(father)	G	his sons by K	=H and J (the *puong* to J)
Mar	(mother)	L	her sons by G	=M, N and Q (the *puong* to Q)

Claims on Cattle acquired on Marriage of x
From To

Other portions go to the sons of the actual claimants without distinction.

Gwanlen kui mar	(father's brother by same mother)	=T or C and sons
Gwanlen kui gwan	(father's brother by different mother)	=Z or S and sons
Nar kui mar	(mother's brother by same mother)	=S or F and sons
Nar kui gwan	(mother's brother by different mother)	=R or Y and sons
Wac	(father's sister)	=U to *her* sons
Manlen	(mother's sister)	=I to *her* sons
Nar gwan	(father's maternal uncle)	=W and sons
Nar mar	(mother's maternal uncle)	=P and sons

The reader should compare the above diagram with those on pp. 102, 114–23.

There are therefore conventional indications based on distinctions within the family group of the various domestic components and on the seniority of the individual. These are illustrated in the diagram. It must be realized, however, that they are no more than indications because other principles and circumstances intervene. In the first place there is the rule that sons should be granted cattle from the family herd with which to marry in strict order of seniority, as already described. This rule is often incompatible with the conventional indications. In the second place persons to fill exactly the relationships required may not all exist. Finally, while alive, a man will have absolute authority in allotting cattle which are his by right among his own sons, and usually he declares a definite distribution before he dies. Here the indications to inheritance rights are not relevant, but they will be so in connexion with cattle which are acquired after his death, or if he dies suddenly without opportunity to make known his will.

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Cattle which are not necessarily part of the marriage distribution system, for example cattle acquired by a man in compensation for such wrongs as hurt and adultery, are not usually bound by these rules, and a man will allot them to his sons before his death, though he will always bear in mind the order of their marriages.

These rules apply generally to the inheritance of cattle by a man's sons. Sometimes, of course, a man has no sons, and in this case his property goes to his next of kin, his brother, or through his brother to his brother's sons, according to the normal rules of relationship of a patrilineal descent group. It must be remembered also that in inheriting a man's cattle the heir inherits his liabilities and claims—liabilities and claims which are in fact part of the system of obligations inherent in the kinship structure. For this reason, apart from cattle actually in a man's possession which pass in the way described above into the possession of his heirs, the laws of inheritance are extremely complicated. Which liabilities and which claims pass to which of the heirs is a question that is decided, and not necessarily immediately after death, by yet other liabilities and claims already in existence or which come to exist between the heirs. Inheritance is therefore an involved problem which requires a full understanding of the bridewealth system in relation to the obligations of kinship. Except for cattle acquired individually by payment of cash or, in the past, in cattle raids, and to some degree cattle acquired as compensation for wrongs, which are accepted within the kinship group as individually owned, inheritance involves all those rules which govern the collective ownership and distribution of cattle within a lineage.

Inheritance of Other Property

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These observations apply mainly to cattle, but also to some extent to sheep and goats. Other corporeal property, including spears, shields, hoes, canoes, ornaments, and nowadays cash, is divided among a man's heirs by common agreement. In the case of cherished objects, particularly spears which have some sacred association, a man will sometimes indicate his heir before he dies, usually his eldest son. This practice is confirmed not only in everyday example but also in tradition. The original founder of a Nuer clan is often quoted as having decreed that this one of his sons should perform a particular function in the political and spiritual activities of the clan, and that another son should receive a particular cow, and so on. Since, however, arguments do not on the whole arise, there is no need for a complicated or exact system of law. Moreover, apart from cattle, or articles which have a recognised value in terms of cattle, Nuer possessions are so easily replaceable that no argument need arise. Disputes over small items of property never appear before the courts.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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4. TRADE AND LOANS

Trade has never been extensive among the Nuer. There is, of course, a division of labour according to sex, but there are few people who can be accounted specialist craftsmen. Individuals acquire the reputation for making certain specific objects with exceptional skill, but they rarely if ever belong to a family especially associated with such activities. This is an exceptional contrast to specialization in the spiritual sphere, for there are hereditary experts capable of dealing with almost any unusual phenomena: ritual experts, magicians, sooth-sayers and medicine-owners, who demand fees, often in cattle, for their services.

The reason lies, perhaps, in the extraordinary simplicity of Nuer material culture. Most things necessary for their migratory way of life (and this applies to all peoples who move with the seasons) can be made either from wood or grass or from the products of their cattle. Seasonal migration in any case precludes a high degree of virtuosity, for things are liable to breakage and are often an unnecessary encumbrance. Moreover the Nuer, who do not use their animals for transport, must carry everything by hand.

Certain objects were of relatively high value, and were exchanged for cattle or sheep and goats. Nowadays, however, most of these articles—hoes, spears, ornaments and the like—can be obtained for cash, and disputes do not often arise in the courts except over the sale of grain.

Trade in Cattle

Trade in cattle is clearly increasing as a cash economy becomes more important to the Nuer but, as yet, cattle are rarely sold except when the purchase of grain is necessary. A significant paragraph from the Jonglei Investigation Team's *Third Interim Report* (1948) is worth quoting, for the figures given, although taken from all Nilotic inhabitants of the Upper Nile Province, include all the Nuer:

> The disposal of surplus livestock is governed by private, family, and tribal circumstances, and is at present tied up with the need to find cash; this is required mainly for the purchase of grain and veterinary vaccines and, to a small extent, for the payment of taxes. There are four channels through which the inhabitants can dispose of their animals:
>
> (*a*) By sale to the Veterinary Laboratory at Malakal, where they will be used to produce cattle-plague vaccine and serum.
>
> (*b*) By sale to Malakal butchers for local consumption.
>
> (*c*) By export to Equatoria Province, in which case most of them will be butchered in Juba.
>
> (*d*) By export northwards to the markets of Kosti and Omdurman.
>
> In the majority of cases all trade is carried out through merchants as intermediaries. . . . Previously it had often been necessary for the District Commissioner concerned to exercise pressure before the local inhabitants could be induced to sell.

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Numbers of Cattle sold in or exported from Malakal in Yearly Totals from 1935 to 1947 Inclusive

1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
2,586	2,413	1,590	2,385	2,817	2,116	2,283	3,124	2,204	3,012	5,944	5,380	5,278[1]

When it is remembered that the Nuer alone possess over half a million head of cattle, these sales figures are not impressive, but the increase in sales is significant.

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There is still relatively little internal trade in cattle among the Nuer. Cattle are not bought and sold in local markets, and disputes over prices or payment rarely come before the courts. Cattle continue to be exchanged, however, and there are still customary rates of exchange.

Exchanges and Loans

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The Nuer word for exchange is *gual*, and is used specifically in connexion with the exchange of cattle. '*Ce thak gual he dou*', 'he exchanged a bull for a cow-calf.' The expression, which is often loosely applied, refers to a direct exchange. In some cases cattle may be exchanged for sheep. It is generally recognized that a large bull or ox is worth a cow-calf, and a cow-calf is worth anything from 10–20 sheep. Such transactions are frequent.[2] In certain situations of spiritual danger—famine, sickness, or death—or in any situation which demands a sacrifice, a sacrificial animal is necessary, and this may not be immediately available. In such circumstances a man will be forced to make an immediate exchange: a cow-calf for a bull-calf, and so on. More

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probably he will borrow a bull or in some cases a ram on the understanding that he will pay the owner its recognized equivalent at some later date. This is in the nature of a loan, and involves some measure of interest. A full-grown ox is worth at least a cow-calf if the debt is discharged at some later date, a ram is worth a bull-calf, and so on. In this case the word *ngual* is usually employed. The word *ngual* implies the passage of time before the transaction is complete, and is thus best translated as 'loan'.

In many cases a Nuer will specify beforehand that he will pay the first cow-calf born to such and such a cow. Such loans are a frequent cause of litigation, for a man is often unwilling to repay the loan after his immediate need has been met, or unable to do so.

[1] Jonglei Investigation Team, *Third Interim Report*, 1948, p. 20.

[2] Among some Nuer and Dinka tribes there is a considerable trade in this manner with Baggara Arabs from the north. Cow-calves are brought in by the latter and exchanged for large oxen, which are then driven north and sold in the markets. This form of trade is, however, limited, for it seems that Baggara cattle will not survive in the areas south of approximately latitude 9°, and though the Nuer have been tempted to try, the experiment has usually been unsuccessful. In any case, there are no statistics available because the practice is not encouraged by the Government owing to the spread of disease.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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Disputes are easily settled by the courts, though execution of judgement is often slow.

Loans Arising from the Institution of Nak

Slightly different situations arise from the institution known as '*nak*'.[1] It appears probable that *nak*—the common word meaning 'to kill', but in this context meaning 'a slaughter'—was part of the tribal ceremonies concerned with the division of age-sets. Age-mates of the younger age-set would segregate themselves from the rest of the community at the cattle-byre of one of their number and live entirely on the meat of oxen slaughtered for the occasion.

Two or three of the youths would club together to provide an ox and, if their immediate relatives were unable to supply one, they would appropriate one from someone else. In this they were given considerable licence and, should the owner object, they could seize it with impunity. Public opinion would not allow the owner to resist, and certainly he would be unable nowadays to obtain immediate redress in the courts. In return, the youths are bound by convention, with the full force of public opinion behind it, to make return after a specified number of years (usually announced by the *wut ghok*).

The exchange values of cattle provided in this manner are much higher than those recognized in normal exchanges or loans. They are:

1 large bull = 2 cow-calves and 1 bull-calf.
1 medium bull = 2 cow-calves.
1 bull-calf = 1 cow-calf.

The debts were not, of course, discharged with the rigidity which these rates imply, but they are quoted by Nuer as being traditional. Just as a man is expected to hand over his ox without show of reluctance in the first place, so would his debtors be expected to discharge their obligations without argument. Nuer are particularly emphatic on this point, but disputes are, none the less, frequently taken to court.

Nearly all these exchanges are necessary to meet some ritual situation, and are therefore of frequent occurrence. Sacrifice is extremely common, and Nuer consume more meat than is commonly supposed. Recent statistics indicate that a large proportion of the total cattle population is slaughtered.[2]

Exchange of Cattle for Grain

Finally, cattle are sometimes exchanged for grain in times of famine. This has not been so frequent in recent years, because grain, imported

[1] I have discussed this institution in more detail in an article, 'The Age-set System and the Institution of "Nak" among the Nuer', *S.N.R.*, 1948.
[2] See Jonglei Investigation Team, *Progress Report*, 1948–9.

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by Arab merchants, is usually available and bought with cash. Cases of this kind sometimes appear before the courts. The facts are not usually denied by the defendant, but execution is often resisted.

Gifts Given in Friendship (*math*)

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Another situation in which cattle are involved, and which is a frequent cause of litigation, is the institution of the 'Best Friend', known in Nuer as *math*. Two men will often form a bond of friendship by exchanging cattle either as a one-sided loan or as a direct exchange, each party taking the other's cow. This can scarcely be described as trade, but is often the cause of dispute since friends fall out.

Nger Ngwen v. *Can Nyoi* (*Jikany Nuer Case*).

Nger and Can were 'best friends' (*math*). Nger gave Can a black cow as a gift. Can gave Nger a cow when Nger got married. Nger then asked Can to give him a cow in milk in order to feed his children. Can obliged by giving him a cow which he had received on the marriage of his daughter. Nger, however, considered that the cow was a bad one and, after a violent quarrel with Can, demanded that their 'friendship' should be broken (*dak math*) publicly and that Can should give back his black cow. The matter was taken to court, but Nger's claim was thrown out as groundless since Can had already given him two cows in exchange.

Exchanges of this sort are a corollary to this form of institutionalized friendship. Disputes of the kind mentioned above are simple enough, though often heated. It is perhaps surprising that they should appear before the courts at all, because the issues must be clear to everyone and there is rarely any doubt.

5. THE INFRINGEMENT OF RIGHTS IN PROPERTY

Self-help

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If the seizure of cattle, the property of another man, is defined as 'theft', then theft of cattle is a common offence among the Nuer. Nuer, however, distinguish clearly between what is considered licensed seizure, either openly or by stealth, and theft for which the thief can produce no customary justification. The word *kwal*, which is used loosely to describe both forms of misappropriation, is employed regularly, but in its more specific meaning it refers to this seizure of what is considered a man's right. Used in connexion with cattle the word implies that the culprit, however mistaken he may be, believes that through kinship ties or in settlement of a debt he has a legal claim to the cattle. Again, a man may seize for himself cattle which he regards as his just due in compensation for some injury done to him by their owner. Thus, for example, a man may seize six head of cattle

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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from a man who has seduced his wife because six head of cattle is the accepted scale of compensation for adultery. Having acquired the cattle, he is in a better position to negotiate his terms with their owner. In some cases he may take more than his recognized due, for this will give him an extra lever to get the matter settled, but in most cases he will wish to settle the matter amicably so that he does not run the risk of having them stolen back from him. Some compromise will be reached. In many cases, provided the culprit has reasonable customary grounds for his action, i.e. if he has right (*cuong*) on his side, the owner of the cattle will not bother to resist and will readily agree to negotiate through some mediator, so that the transfer of the cattle may be socially recognized and not lead to blows between them. Moreover the closer the relationship between the man who takes the cattle and the owner, the more likely will it be that the former will have some legal justification for taking them. The expression, *ce yang-da kwal*, so common among Nuer, usually means that someone has seized the speaker's cattle in (according to the speaker) the mistaken opinion that he had a definite right to them.

Frequently the culprit knows that he has only a very thin excuse for taking them, and often removes himself and the cattle to some distance where the owner can get legal satisfaction only with difficulty, for whereas in his own community opinion will be against him, the people with whom he takes refuge are not interested and do not know the full implications of the case. If the injured party agrees that the culprit has a right to the cattle, peaceable negotiations will follow; if he does not, disputes may result between them which may or may not lead to blows. According to Professor Evans-Pritchard, a man will never steal a cow from a fellow tribesman merely because he wants one.

He has, on the other hand, no hesitation in stealing cows from persons belonging to neighbouring tribes and will even go with friends to another tribe in order to steal from them. This theft (*kwal*) is not considered in any way wrong.[1]

This really comes under the heading of cattle-raiding, and depends on the current relations between tribes. If, as frequently happened in the past, tribes were technically at war with each other, then such cattle-raiding was considered a legitimate move in the course of war. Moreover, if a blood-feud existed and homicide cases remained unsettled, the seizure of cattle might have some legal justification behind it. Nuer tribes were not, however, always hostile, and the tribal boundaries did not imply such a rigid line of demarcation as to pre-

[1] Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, p. 165. I quote this passage because it refers to conditions some twenty years ago when cattle raids were more common and, since legal remedies through the courts were less effective than they are nowadays, 'self-help' was not unusual.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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clude social relations and intermarriage. Moreover, a legal mechanism under the control of Leopard-Skin Chiefs existed whereby a state of war could be brought to an end when both sides were heartily sick of the endless danger and insecurity which such major feuds entailed. There are instances quoted in Nuer tribal history when these matters were settled, and though compensation for homicide was usually waived because of the large number of persons for whom compensation would be demanded on both sides, the illicit seizure of cattle was often assessed in the final count.

Therefore the seizure of cattle without legal justification, real or supposed, within a tribal community was extremely rare, and the stealing of cattle from other tribes was really an act of war. Raiding the Dinka, a legitimate Nuer prey, was something different. It was, however, extremely common for Nuer to 'take the law into their own hands' and wrest what they considered their just dues from their debtors without bothering to arrange peaceful negotiations through some mediator or, later, through the medium of established courts. In most cases this action was taken only if the defendant in the case was unwilling to negotiate. These observations apply largely to the past when no courts existed, or when they had not yet developed present standards of efficiency and effectiveness. Nevertheless Nuer still often seize cattle which they consider their just due.

Theft of Cattle

There are certain specific situations which fall within the true definition of theft: when cattle are taken or material possessions misappropriated without any real or supposed reason other than that the thief covets them. It has been mentioned that the word *kwal* applies generally to all situations when the rightful or wrongful seizure of stock or material objects takes place. There is a specific term in the Nuer vocabulary which is applied when stock or personal possessions are taken for no apparent reason other than that the thief wants them. That such a word exists at all and is used to describe these circumstances is evidence of the distinction. This word is *wuan*:[1] a man will say *ce yang-da wuan* or *ce yoka wuan*, 'he has stolen my cow', 'he has stolen my money', and in using this expression he implies that the culprit did so for no accepted reason.

Cases where a man steals cattle from his neighbours merely because he covets them are rare. He would not be able to hide the theft unless

[1] Two other words are worth mentioning here. The word *pac* is used to describe situations where superior force is used, e.g. when cattle are raided by a more powerful group from a weaker one and, nowadays, when the Government or local authorities seize cattle by force. The word *nac*, which also means theft or misappropriation, implies deprivation by fraud or cunning, i.e. swindling. *Wuan* also implies stealth or cunning.

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he fled to some other Nuer tribe, and the force of local public opinion would compel him to return them if he wished to continue residence in his own community. Upon occasion a man will steal another man's barren cow or bull and kill and eat it, motivated by greed or hunger. This, which is known as *yang micaa luc* in Nuer, is considered a serious offence, and Nuer say that in the old days compensation of ten head of cattle would be demanded. In the past at any rate restitution in equivalent value was not considered sufficient to appease the feelings of the persons who had suffered the loss. Nuer consciously express the concept of a deterrent when they say that such damages are demanded because otherwise others would do the same. Another offence, which is recognized as such in Nuer law, is to misappropriate someone's cow and try to disguise the fact by altering the ear marks on the animal. Nuer say that the cow would have to be returned or another substituted and a bull-calf paid as compensation to satisfy the wronged owner. The principle of compensation applied in cases where cattle are stolen and secretly eaten by the thief is applied also in the cases of sheep and goats, *dei micaa luc*. The traditional scale of compensation for the latter was six head of cattle. Apart from the fact that cases of this sort are nowadays almost unknown, it is doubtful whether more than equivalent restitution would be enforced by the court. It is more likely that the culprit would be sentenced to imprisonment.

Theft of Other Material Possessions

Apart from cattle, there are few material possessions which come within the scope of this term. Nuer are persistent beggars, though they take refusal light-heartedly. They pester friends and relations to give them personal property which has taken their fancy—spears, cloth, beads, tobacco, &c. Sometimes they may take these things without the owner's permission. Depending largely on the relationship of the persons involved, the owner will rarely do more than protest or grumble and demand (later) some equivalent privilege in return. Neither the word *kwal* nor *tuan* would be used in these circumstances. Most articles of personal property are so easily obtainable, being made from raw materials locally available, that a man would scarcely bother to take them, or if he did, their removal would not be missed. Apart, however, from such easily acquired possessions as described above, certain material objects were, in the past, only obtained with difficulty through meagre trade channels, and their misappropriation was considered a cause for litigation or retaliation. It should be noted also that most of these material objects were bought with cattle, and that their removal would cause proportionate discomfort or suffering to the plaintiff because they were one and all

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but all members of the lineage do not practise. Professor Evans-Pritchard has listed his functions as:

(i) Anything to do with the land—especially the welfare of crops.
(ii) A limited rôle in rain-making and the regulation of the weather.
(iii) The ritual of homicide (see Chapter II).
(iv) The ritual of incest (see Chapter III, Section 3).
(v) The ritual of preventing feuds and protecting warriors on raiding expeditions.
(vi) Arbitration in all kinds of disputes.

Wut ghok: The Cattle Expert

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This is also an office the potentiality of which runs in certain families, and it is to that extent hereditary. The functions of the *wut ghok* are purely ritual and, apart from cattle, are concerned with the social processes of the age-grade system.

Other functions may be listed as follows:

(i) To increase the fertility of cattle and milk production and to ensure that cows give birth to cow-calves. To avoid cattle disease.
(ii) To perform the ritual of warfare, and in particular to ensure that many cattle are captured in raids.
(iii) To perform fecundity rites for women and to assist elderly spinsters to secure husbands.

As in the case of the *kuaar muon*, the *wut ghok* is concerned with activities which are both beneficial and widespread. I only know of two cases brought before the court where a *wut ghok* was alleged to have used his powers for personal gain or for revenge upon the cattle of an enemy. One of these cases caused something of a sensation and considerable animosity.

Kuaar thoi: The Water Expert

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A hereditary office running in certain lineages, sometimes of reputed extraneous origin (probably Shilluk or Anuak or what the Nuer call Bar). The *kuaar thoi* may be called upon to bless raiding parties and to perform ritual to ensure that they do not drink of water poisoned by the enemy. His principal function, however, is to bless the water, and to see that there is an abundance of fish and that the people are successful in catching them. He also performs ritual against crocodiles, and is indeed particularly associated with crocodiles and often called *kuaar nyang* (crocodile expert). A *kuaar thoi* is often called in to assist when cattle are fording a river. To ensure that crocodiles do not attack them, he takes a pole which he thrusts into the reeds along the bank and places on this an iron ring. He then takes a sheep, ties its legs

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APPENDIX I

NUERLAND

Populations and Area

Central Nuer District

Tribe	*Humans*[1]	*Cattle*[2]	*Area in square miles*[3]	*Courts*
Lak	37,000	44,000*	1,500	
Gaawar	19,000	48,000*	5,120	11 (B) Regional Courts
Thiang	13,000	15,000*	970	1 (C) Main Court
Lou	13,000	126,000*	5,290	

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Western Nuer District

Bul	12,000	50,000	2,320	
Leik	17,000	40,000	2,140	
Jagei	14,000	31,000*	1,220	5 (B) Regional Courts
Dok (and Aak)	11,000	35,000*	1,930	2 (C) Main Courts
Nuong (and Dur)	14,000	16,000	2,490	
W. Jikany	18,000	29,000*	1,100	

Eastern Nuer District

Gaajok	45,000	45,000	7,190	4 (B) Regional Courts
Gaajak	33,000	33,000		11 (A) Branch Courts
Totals	356,000	512,000	31,270	

[1] Based on recent tax-payer figures multiplied by 4·5 to nearest 1000 (1952). This multiplier is purely arbitrary and is probably high, but the figures given are consistent.

[2] Figures marked * are statistics taken from veterinary inoculation campaigns and represent a minimum figure. It is clear that all cattle were not counted, and possibly up to 20 per cent. should be added. Other figures are merely a rough estimate.

[3] Areas estimated by planimeter, but boundaries are not clearly demarcated or mapped and the areas are necessarily only approximate.

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Chapter Two

RESOURCES OF THE NUER

WILD ANIMALS AND CATTLE

WILD animals abound in Nuerland. Lions, leopards, giraffes, buffaloes, elephants, hippos, monkeys are found as well as other species, and also crocodiles, snakes, and scorpions. 136

Sometimes animals are killed with spears (Fig. 4), sometimes traps are made to catch them. Holes are dug into which they fall and are unable to get out. Men sometimes chase them and drive them toward the trap which they have made. Giraffes may be killed in this way as they cannot run fast, especially if the ground be muddy. Monkeys are safe in Nuerland as a Nuer will not willingly kill them. If a monkey is killed, it will surely rain hard, but if it is killed in the dry season, the weather will only become cloudy. 224 [825]

Probably the largest snake found here is the python. Many of the snakes are deadly poisonous. One is a spitting snake. Another is said to bite and also sting its victim with its tail at the same time, much as a scorpion stings. Another snake, the 'thatut', is said to leave a tooth in the person it bites. The Nuer believe that if a person is once bitten by a 'thatut' no other snake will deign to bite him. 136 [825]

The number of cattle owned by individuals varies in different parts of Nuerland. Those who live along the Nile have many cattle. Those in the Garjak country have more cattle than those near Nasser. In the regions where cattle are more plentiful the number of cattle asked as a marriage price is greater. 231

Cattle with the wide-spreading long horns are the most desirable. A Nuer is afraid that a cow without horns may 231 776

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231 turn into a 'Lat' (a combination of ogre and cannibal which
[776] figures largely in folk-lore tales. Nuer firmly believe in these Lats and fear them).

Nuer, be they men, women, or children love their cattle; they are the pride of the tribe. The people delight in being among them. When a boy has his tribal marks
[551] cut, he assumes an ox name in addition to his own.

[825] The cattle are always supposed to see the new moon one night before the people see it.

If a cow is sick, she is well cared for. Everything possible is done for her so far as the Nuer's knowledge goes. A wasps' nest is soaked in water and the mixture forcibly administered to the cow as a preventive against a certain fever.

A bunch of a certain kind of leaves tied about a cow's neck is supposed to help her if all is not right with her when she has just calved.

Muzzles made out of thorns are fastened on the mouth of a calf when they wish to prevent it from sucking.

The Nuer also have sheep, and numerous dogs may be seen.

[262] During the fishing season when many go to the fishing camps, the Nuer depends upon fish and milk for his food. The cattle are always taken to the fishing camp—for grazing is usually good—hence the milk supply.

THE FISHING SEASON

226 When the dry season is on, the river falls fast and the
221 Nuer is eager to fish. The rivers are full of fish, great big ones, including the Nile perch and several other large white fish which are specially desired for food. In December and January Nuer with their cattle move from the villages to the fishing camps. They build (Fig. 6)
[342] bee-hive-shaped houses—even the walls are of grass.

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Water must be heated in the late afternoon for the baby's bath. It is no short process. (Fig. 11)

A MAN'S WORK

A man's work usually begins at sunrise too. He has probably slept in the barn. He arises, covered with cow-manure ashes. He cleans his teeth with the ash and later on in the morning may wash his face and hands. While he may drink a large quantity of water during the day he seldom drinks any water before breakfast or with a meal. He usually stays among the cattle until he is called to his breakfast about nine o'clock. Then he eats and is ready to spend the day among the cattle. He takes them out to graze about ten o'clock in the morning and returns with them in the late afternoon. He loves his cattle. His day is a happy one spent in their midst, his human companions being other men who have taken their cattle out to graze also. His spear and club are ever with him. In the late afternoon he comes home with his cattle, finding his supper is being prepared. A plunge in the river every time he goes to it refreshes him. After supper is over visiting until bedtime is the usual close of the work of the average day.

The day's work may be varied if any of his cattle are sick or if there is a dance which he wishes to attend. Or maybe the District Commissioner is in the village hearing cases or collecting taxes, and so he joins the throng and spends his day listening to the cases or bringing up some case of his own before this representative of the Government.

During the planting season, the fishing season, or the season when the dura must be cut, this daily programme of the Nuer man differs and his work for the day may be a little more strenuous.

221 *March - April.* When the rains begin the old people return to the village for sowing.
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233 *June.* The rest of the people follow with the cattle. The move from camp to village is direct, whereas in the move from village to camp there is an intervening period of wandering.

The Nuer year is therefore divided into two parts, consisting of a period in the villages and a period in the camp. This annual transhumance is necessary for the very existence of the Nuer. Rinderpest prevents complete dependence on cattle, so that they must have villages on highlands, with gardens, in order to grow the necessary supplies of grain. Climatic conditions prevent complete reliance on cultivation and the need of fresh pastures and water for the cattle forces them into dry-season camps near permanent supplies.

361 Homesteads may be strung out along sandy ridges with gardens at the back and grazing in front and the location and size of the villages depend on the distribution and extent of the higher ground suitable for cultivation. The direction of the dry-season movements are determined by ecological conditions. Transhumance enhances the importance of units larger than the villages which, for economic reasons, cannot easily maintain a self-sufficient isolation as do the Shilluk, Anuak, Acholi and Lango villages where the emphasis is on cultivation.

ECONOMY

The economic importance of cattle to the Nuer

231 Economically, cattle are chiefly important for milk and milk products,
262 such as whey and liquid cheese. We are told that the Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give.

Nuer eat meat boiled and roasted but, although they are particularly fond of it, they do not raise cattle for slaughter. It is considered that people ought not to kill cattle solely for food and, except on sacrificial and special occasions with a ritual aspect, the Nuer refrain from doing so. It is even thought that animals killed specifically for food might curse their owners.

Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa, the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle and use it as a supplementary article of
[252] diet in dry season camps. The blood is boiled and taken with porridge as flavouring or is allowed to coagulate into a block which is roasted and then cut in slices.

237 Milk, meat and blood are the food products derived from cattle but the herds also furnish the materials for implements and other necessary articles. Skins are used for sleeping on, for trays, for carrying fuel, making cord for tethering, leather collars for oxen and in making pipes, spears and shields. Tail hairs are used for ornamentation, bones and horns are used for instruments, scrapers and beaters. Cattle dung is used for plastering walls and floors of huts; dried dung is used for fuel and

ashes from it are smeared over the body. Cattle urine is used in churning and cheese-making and also for washing. Evans-Pritchard rightly calls the Nuer 'parasites of the cow'.(1)

The social importance of cattle among the Nuer

The fact that cattle have more than an economic value may be amply illustrated from the part they play in social life.

Relationships with neighbouring tribal groups are partly dependent on the value attached to cattle. The Nuer are contemptuous of those who have no cattle, while they raid those who have in order that they may augment their own herds. A man will defend his cattle to the last and will die for the sake of the herds. Disputes within the Nuer tribe are often about cattle and about the ownership of pastures and water supplies necessary for their well-being. Cattle are paid in compensation for homicide and injury. It is the needs of the cattle which compel the yearly dry-season migration to fresh pastures.

Cattle form the bridewealth of the Nuer that is, the successive transfers of cattle from the bridegroom's family to that of the bride marking the fact of marriage. Cattle are farmed out among friends as a precaution against the total destruction of a herd by disease; thus they tend to consolidate friendships and to maintain the network of relationships between people within a village and between the inhabitants of separate villages.

Family relationships are expressed in terms of cattle, as are the rules of incest and the status of an individual. Men take 'ox-names' - *names which refer to the colour or other peculiarities of their favourite animals.* In ritual cattle play an important part; they are sacrificed to the spirits and, when he desires to establish contact with ghosts and spirits, a man rubs ashes along the back of an animal, invoking the ancestral spirits as he does so. Cows are dedicated to the totemic spirits and the sky spirits. Daily life revolves round the needs of cattle; Nuer think cattle and talk cattle. Oxen are valued for display and prestige, and the merits of their favourite beasts are boasted of by their owners. Nuer language is rich in terms describing the various attributes of cattle. Tassels, decorations and carved tethering pegs are made by the owners, while the favourites in the herd will be played with, sung to and have poems made up about them. Young men will get boys to lead their favourite ox round the village for all to admire and will themselves leap behind it. Among the Nuer there is scarcely any aspect of life into which cattle do not enter and play an important part. Evans-Pritchard writes that the Nuer define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle and that their social idiom is a bovine idiom.

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(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.30.

GOD

*776 Before discussing further the separation of God from man I will mention some of the chief attributes of God. He is in the sky, but his being in the sky does not mean that he is not at the same time elsewhere, and on earth. Indeed, as will be seen, Nuer religious thought cannot be understood unless God's closeness to man is taken together with his separation from man, for its meaning lies precisely in this paradox.

Nuer say that God is everywhere, that he is 'like wind' and 'like air'. According to Father Crazzolara,[1] he may be spoken of by the epithets *jiom*, wind, and *ghau*, universe, but these words only [538] stand for God in poems or in an allegorical sense and are illustrations of the liking the Nilotic peoples show in their poetry for metonymy and synecdoche. God is not wind, but *cere jiom*, like wind; and he is not *ghau*, the universe, but *cak ghaua*, the creator of the universe. Another poetic epithet by which he may be referred to is *tutgar*. This is an ox-name, taken from an ox of the ●[231] kind Nuer call *wer*, which has wide spreading horns and is the most majestic of their beasts (Plate I). The name is a combination of two words: *tut*, which has the sense of 'strength' or 'greatness', and *gar*, which has the sense of 'omnipresent', as in another of God's titles, *kwoth me gargar*, the omnipresent God (*gargar* can also be translated 'limitless').[2] But the commonest Nuer way of trying to express their idea of the nature of God is to say that he is like wind or air, a metaphor which seems appropriate to us because it is found throughout the hierological literature of the world and we are particularly familiar with it in the Old Testament. Among the Nuer the metaphor is consistent not only with the absence of any fixed abode of God but also of any places where he is thought particularly to dwell, for air and wind are everywhere. Unlike the other spirits God has no prophets or sanctuaries or earthly forms.

*776 196 God, Spirit in the heavens who is like wind and air, is the creator and mover of all things. Since he made the world he is addressed in prayers as *kwoth ghaua*, Spirit of the universe, with the sense of creator of the universe. The word *cak*, used as a noun, can mean the creation, that is, all created things, and hence the

[1] Op. cit. p. 72.

[2] Dr. Mary Smith tells me that if a ne'er-do-well is asked how he expects to live he may reply '*kwoth e gargar*', 'God is limitless' (in his power to aid), in the same way as a man may say of the earth or of the universe that it is *gargar*, limitless.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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PLATE I

●231

Ox with spreading horns

[facing p. 4]

SPIRITS OF THE ABOVE

× 776 782 ● 231 426 To appreciate how Nuer get into such difficulties with their dedicated cattle as I have mentioned we must bear in mind the overwhelming importance of cattle in their lives, that cattle are generally the issue in disputes, and that almost every Nuer owes cattle and has cattle owing to him, debts which are often not settled, if at all, for years and sometimes even for generations. Nuer will go to almost any lengths to obtain cattle to which they think they have a right and to put off the settlement of their own debts. It is not surprising that in these circumstances a man may postpone fulfilling his obligation to a spirit if it is a question of having to choose between the claims of an importunate creditor and of a spirit which, it is hoped, will be satisfied for the time being with the man's good intention; or that to fulfil an unavoidable obligation to a kinsman a man may take a liberty with a spirit which, he hopes, will not take offence at a fault in such compelling circumstances.

× 776 782 Besides dedicating a cow to his spirit and sacrificing an ox, sheep, or goat to it when it is displeased, a Nuer ought now and again to hold a ceremony in its honour. This generally takes place after the harvest has been gathered in and there is plenty of beer. I attended one of these ceremonies in the home of Karlual, who figured in the story of Galuak's sickness which I have just related. It was held in honour of *deng*, who is what the Nuer call *kwoth ciengde* or *kwoth goale*, *the spirit of his home* or *of his family*. I was told that each of Karlual's numerous brothers holds a like ceremony in turn till it is his turn to hold it again. The ceremony of the year before had been on a large scale and an ox had been sacrificed at it. *Deng* had afterwards told Karlual through the mouth of someone who had become possessed by it that all it wanted this year was some beer, so the ceremony I witnessed was on a smaller scale. It is known as 'the bathing of the cow in beer'.

The ceremony was held in the morning and was very late in starting because those who attended it, or some of them, had first attended a ceremony of the same kind elsewhere in the village, that held by a man called Mokwac for the spirit of his concubine's dead husband. When I arrived at Karlual's homestead I found that a gourdful of beer had been placed at the side of a clump of grass at the edge of the kraal. Karlual's brothers and their families

intention is to sacrifice it in the near future, the dedication being in the nature of a consecration for sacrifice.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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811 confirmed to some extent by the evidence of my photographs,[1] supported these conclusions, but I asked Dr. Lienhardt and Dr. Howell to verify them, which they have been able to do. It should [513] follow also that a husband sleeps on the right side of the hut and his wife on the left side, and here again Dr. Lienhardt has been good enough to confirm that this is the invariable practice. He has made a further and important observation. I was aware that the [123] west is associated with death and the east with life, but I did not know, till he told me, that east is identified with right and west with left, thus bringing into the left–right polarity the polar representations not only of life and death but also of the cardinal points east and west. I am indebted to Dr. Mary Smith for the further observation that Nuer speak of 'right-handed peace' (*'mal me cuec'*). They would never speak of left-handed peace.

It is in accord with what we have learnt of the associations with [124] left and right in Nuer thought that Nuer youths should empha- 301 size the contrast between the two hands by putting the left arm out of action altogether for months or even a year or two. This they do by pressing a series of metal rings (*thiau*) into the flesh of the left arm from the wrist upwards so tightly that sores and great pain result and the arm is rendered useless for any purpose other than the display of fortitude and as a passive instrument for the right hand to play upon (Plate XII). A ring on a finger of the right hand is rubbed up and down the discs on the imprisoned left arm to accompany the compliments and endearments of courtship. Such a mutilation is only fully intelligible in terms of symbolic associations. Here the fact that it is only the left horn of favourite [231] oxen which is debased (if the right is trained at all it is trained upwards) is of great significance, for, as will be seen, a man and his favourite ox are identified. What he does to his left hand he does to his ox's left horn: what he does to the ox he does to himself.

826 It is perhaps important to add that Nuer do not think of the 811 left hand as being in a material sense evil. Left-handed persons suffer no disabilities at all and are not considered in other respects as different from other people. Nuer do not, in my experience, attach any importance to the matter, but simply say of a left-

[1] All deformed horns in the photographs are left horns. Some branches in them, however, are to the left of the windscreens, but Nuer erect branches for practical purposes as well as for religious reasons, and I do not think it is possible to distinguish between them by sight.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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associated with courtship; and also in the pursuits of herding and hunting. All these activities require the use of the spear, but it is important that we recognize that it is not the acquisition of a weapon, whatever its economic value might have been in the past, nor even its utility, great though that may be, that gives a crucial significance to the gift of a spear at initiation. Its significance is moral, not merely utilitarian. It is not the spear itself, nor its possession, which is stressed but the activities associated with it: war and raiding, dancing and display, and herding. The uses of the spear itself and the evaluations of its uses as an index of social personality are blended, so that the spear is not just a weapon but also something which stands for a very complex set of social relations.

But the investment of a youth with a spear at his initiation would seem to be something more, for, as we will see in discussing the sacrificial role of cattle, initiation is not only into the social life of adults but also into a new relationship with the cattle which has an important religious side to it. There is now established an identification, deriving from the sacrificial situation, between the initiates and cattle and, looked at from this point of view, the rites of initiation may be said to have a sacramental character. The boy enters into communion with the spirits and ghosts of his lineage through the cattle. 'The spear of the cutting (initiation)' is thus a symbol of a sacramental change as well as of a change in social status. In both symbolic aspects it is an extension of, and stands for, the right arm and represents strength, strength of the soul as well as strength of the body of the person; and, as I shall attempt to show, in both the symbolism is also a representation of the collective strength of the lineage to which the person belongs.

I have suggested that the fighting-spear has a symbolic meaning for Nuer besides what it means for them as a weapon and tool—that it is a projection of the self and stands for the self. This is most important for an understanding of Nuer sacrifice. Its manipulation in the most common, and for a study of religion the most significant, sacrifices, the personal and piacular ones, expresses, if our interpretation is right, the throwing of the whole person into the intention of the sacrifice. It is not only said but also thought, desired, and felt. Not only the lips make it but also the mind, the will, and the heart. This interpretation makes the miming with the spear intelligible for, as an extension of the right arm, it stands

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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CHAPTER X

THE SACRIFICIAL ROLE OF CATTLE

I

231 Nuer are very largely dependent on the milk of their herds, and in their harsh environment they probably could not live without them, any more than the cattle could live without the care and protection of their owners. Their carcasses also furnish Nuer with [237] meat, tools, ornaments, sleeping-hides, and various other objects of domestic use; and their sun-dried dung provides fuel for the great smouldering smudges that give protection from mosquitoes to man and beast alike. Women are more interested in the cows, and this is natural for they have charge of milking and dairy work. Men's interest in the cow is, apart from their value for breeding, rather for their use in obtaining wives, and they are interested in the oxen for the same reason, and also because they provide them with a means of display and, which is the matter I am about to discuss, a means of sacrifice. But for all Nuer—men, women, and children—cattle are their great treasure, a constant source of pride and joy, the occasion also of much foresight, anxiety, and quarrelling; and they are their intimate companions from birth to death. It is not difficult to understand, therefore, that Nuer give their cattle devoted attention, and it is not surprising that they talk more of cattle than of anything else and have a vast vocabulary relating to them and their needs.

231 Though I restrict myself here to a consideration of the religious 771 significance of their cattle for Nuer we must not for a moment forget that this is bound up with their secular uses. Otherwise it will not be appreciated what it is that Nuer surrender in sacrifice, the most precious thing they possess. Nevertheless, if cattle were only used for food and obtaining wives writers about the Nuer, and also about other Nilotic peoples, might have been content just to draw attention to the great interest these peoples have in them. But cattle figure so prominently in their lives in ways not directly concerned with their maintenance or their use for practical pur-

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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poses that European observers have perceived that in the relationship between men and cattle there is something more than can be stated in simple terms of husbandry and exploitation. I mention only those whose observations refer specifically to the Nuer. Ernst Marno says that we may speak of their veneration (Verehrung) of cattle, that the largest and finest ox of a herd is regarded as a guardian genius (schützende Genius), and that they refer to this beast by the same name, '*nyeledit*', as they assign to the conception of a Supreme Being and to thunder.[1] Likewise, Mr. H. C. Jackson tells us that the bull which a youth receives from his father at initiation 'is a kind of guardian spirit of its owner who calls upon it in times of stress and difficulty', and in another place he speaks of this bull as the 'tutelary spirit' of its owner.[2] Captain H. H. Wilson says of the Nuer that, like the other Nilotic peoples of the White Nile, 'what religion they possess is centred in the cow';[3] and Professor D. Westermann writes that 'the attachment of a man to his cows and of a boy to the bull with which his father presents him may almost be called religious'.[4] There is, however, no evidence at all that cattle are venerated or in themselves are in any way regarded as guardian spirits, and in so far as it may be true to say that Nuer religion 'is centred in the cow' or that their attachment to cattle 'may almost be called religious', in so far, that is, that we may legitimately speak, as Marianne Schmidl did in her interesting paper on the subject,[5] of '*die sakrale Stellung des Rinder*', it is for a different reason.

Another writer about the Nilotic peoples and a very experienced anthropologist, my teacher Professor C. G. Seligman, said about Nilotic cattle that 'it is difficult to describe their importance to their masters or the love and care the latter have for their beasts, but it is certainly no exaggeration to say that it amounts to what psychologists would term "identification".'[6] What seems chiefly to have persuaded Professor Seligman to use this word is the Nilotic

[1] Ernst Marno, *op. cit.*, pp. 343 and 349–50. What he says about '*nyeledit*' is unintelligible.

[2] H. C. Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 94 and 96.

[3] *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, edited by Lieut.-Col. Count Gleichen, vol. i, 1905, p. 140.

[4] Ray Huffman, *Nuer Customs and Folk-Lore*, 1931, p. vii.

[5] Marianne Schmidl, 'Die Grundlagen der Nilotenkultur', *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, LXV. Band, Wien, 1935. See also Johannes Weissenberg, *Tierbuch in Afrika*, 1904, p. 16.

[6] C. G. and B. Z. Seligman, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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231 583 custom of taking personal names from their cattle in addition to the personal names they are given soon after birth. I have discussed elsewhere[1] the general social significance of names and other modes of address among the Nuer and here I speak only of their cattle-names and principally of their ox-names, these being of chief importance.

These names are often spoken of in writings about the Nuer as bull-names, but ox-names, in the use of the word 'ox' to denote a castrated bull, is a more correct designation.[2] Nuer speak always of such a name as *cot thak*, the name of an ox, and *thak* is a castrated animal in contrast to a *tut*, an entire animal. It is true that when a youth takes his name from a beast it may be entire, but it will be castrated later. Nuer may not castrate a male calf till it is nearly two years old, but they do so before it is likely to gender with the cows. It is not for pedantry that I make the distinction: it has a logical, and perhaps psychological, appositeness to the equation of man and ox in sacrifice.

Ox-names are essentially the names of men, males who have passed through the rite of initiation to manhood. Boys may take ox-names in play but only in imitation of their elders. Likewise, maidens may take ox-names, from bull calves of the cows they milk, but they are mainly used only between girls themselves and in the nature of a game, copying their brothers; and the names are short-lived. Married women use cow-names among themselves, but, here again, this is similitude, and it has none of the significance of the ox-names of men. Perhaps also here again the distinction between the copy-names of boys, girls, and women and those taken by men may be important because of its logical relation, which concerns our present discussion, to the fact that men, and not boys or women, are the sacrificial agents. The two sides of the standard equation are the human male and the bovine male, man and ox.

231 [377] 815 When a boy is initiated his father gives him in sign of his manhood an ox or, as I have explained, a bull calf which will later be castrated; and this ox, which he describes as *'thak gureda'*, 'the ox of my cutting (initiation)', becomes his *dil thak*, what I have spoken about as his favourite ox (Marno's *'Lieblingstier'*), though

[1] 'Nuer Modes of Address', *Uganda Journal*, 1948.

[2] Throughout the literature on the Nuer, 'ox' or 'steer' or 'bullock' should in most cases be substituted for 'bull'.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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the word *dil* has generally the sense of 'pure', 'true', 'perfect', or 'aristocratic'. It is the ox of perfection. It is the young man's friend and companion. He plays with it and fondles it. He composes poems about it and sings them to it, and he gets a small boy to lead it round the camp in the morning or evening as he leaps behind it chanting poems. He walks among the cattle at night ringing a cattle-bell and singing of his kin, his loves, and his cattle, and he praises this ox among all other oxen. He makes tassels to hang from one of its horns, and he loves to see it toss the tassel in the air with a sweep of the neck. He acquires an iron bell to hang round its neck, and no music, unless it be the ox's lowing, is sweeter to his ears than its tinkling in the pastures. He goes to the edge of the camp to meet it when it returns from grazing in the evening. He is never tired of describing its points, and as he does so, and also in dancing, he may hold up his arms in imitation of its horns. Should the ox die he is downcast; and should he die it must be sacrificed at his mortuary ceremony.

The youth now also enters through this ox into a new kind of relationship with God, the guardian spirits of his family and lineage, and the ghosts of his ancestors. When he has tethered it in the kraal for the night he may pet it, removing ticks from its belly and scrotum and picking out adherent dung from its anus; and he may at the same time rub ashes on its back. Ordinarily I think he does this simply because the ox, which has suffered from parasites throughout the day, gets relief from its back being rubbed, but I was told that he may occasionally as he does so speak a few words to God or to the ghosts. While it is not until a man marries and has children and an independent household that he sacrifices

FIG. 5
Hollowed-out earthenware log, used as stool, &c.

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16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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animals, dedicates them to spirits, and in other ways makes formal use of them for religious purposes, nevertheless, the ox a father gives his son at initiation provides him with a direct means of communication with the spiritual world. It is more than a possession, more even than part of his social personality—it is a point of meeting between soul and spirit and has therefore a sacramental character also.

From the colours, their distribution, the shape of the horns, and other peculiarities of the ox of his initiation a youth takes, or is given by his companions, his *cot thak*, his ox-name. It may be the same word as that by which the ox's markings are indicated, but generally it combines the name for the markings with a prefix descriptive of something connected with the ox. For example, a man whose favourite ox is black and white (*rial*) may call himself *Luthrial* or *Luerial*, *luth* being a large cattle-bell and *luer* a long tassel attached to one of the horns. At first only his age-mates may know his new name, but the older people soon get to know it too, for they hear his mates greet him by it and they also hear him shout it out as he displays himself with the ox in the cattle camps which are formed soon after initiation. Also, young men of about the same age call out their ox-names, with many embellishments, to one another at dances, often after a bout of duelling with clubs, and when in a dance two lines of youths stand opposite each other and shower ox-names on one another preparatory to a spectacular jump into the air in unison.

The calling of a youth by a name the same as, or derived from, that by which his favourite ox is referred to is perhaps the most striking example of, and evidence for, what Professor Seligman speaks of as 'identification'. Indeed, in listening to Nuer poems one is often in doubt whether it is the ox or the man that is being spoken about. The representations are never entirely distinct. Somewhat different, though related and also very striking, is the custom called *thak nuc*, the calling out of the (name of the) ox. A man shouts out the name of his favourite ox—the ox's name, not his ox-name, which may be an elaboration of the ox's name—when he hurls his spear at an enemy or at his quarry when hunting or fishing, for example, '*nu rial*', 'black-and-white (ox)', or '*thakda nu rial*', 'my black-and-white ox'. In some of my earlier writings I have translated *nuc* by 'invocation' and 'to invoke', following Driberg's translation of the Lango

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gwongo,[1] but I avoid doing so in an account of Nuer religion partly because I have in it used these words to translate another word, *lam*, but also because nothing is in fact invoked, and it is precisely the use of the words in connexion with oxen that has led to the erroneous conclusion that a favourite ox is a sort of 'tutelary spirit'. The ox is not called on, but called out. It is not an invocation but a cry of excitement and triumph as the striker strikes his foe or prey. That the ox is not being called on for aid is conclusively shown by the fact that in the same circumstances a Nuer may shout out instead '*tet cueda*' followed by a kinship term, usually that referring to the mother's sister: '*tet cueda malene*', 'my right hand, my mother's sisters'. Nuer are not calling on their mother's sisters for aid but using an emotive ejaculation, in which the ideas of strength (the right hand) and good-will (the mothers' sister) are combined. When they cry out the names of their oxen the ejaculation is a triumphant assertion of the self, for which the ox stands as a symbol. Also a man may cry out the name of his ox on occasions when there is no question of success or failure: as he brandishes his spear as though to strike in dancing, when making spectacular leaps into the air (*raw*), and sometimes in making a sacrificial invocation. It is both self-expression and a drawing of attention to the self.

It should be borne in mind that a man normally retains his ox-name and continues to be called by it and also to shout out the name of the ox from which it is derived long after the ox is no more in his possession. A man may part, though always with regret, with a favourite ox for marriage or sacrifice, or the ox may die. It is then replaced by another favourite, though when a man is older and has a herd of his own he may not identify himself in quite the same way or to the same extent as when he was young with any one particular ox. If another ox takes the place of the first favourite, the ox of initiation, its owner may take, or be given, a new ox-name derived from this second ox, the new name then either taking the place of the old or both being used; but most men keep for life the ox-names they acquire at the time of their initiation. It is the name of this ox that a man shouts out in war, hunting, dancing and leaping, and in sacrificial invocations, and

[1] J. H. Driberg, *The Lango*, 1923, pp. 109–10: 'One who takes a hostile spear on his shield invokes by name a favourite bull belonging to his father or maternal uncle (*gwongo nwoi*).'

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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231 553 by which, in one or other form he is addressed by his peers; though it has long ago departed. Fundamentally, therefore, it is not the ox of initiation itself with which there is 'identification' but ox, the idea of oxen. The ox of initiation is the prototype of the ox–man relationship, and it is a kind of focal point at which the feelings a Nuer has towards cattle converge and run over into demonstration by word and gesture. When the ox is long ago dead the relationship continues, because ultimately it is not one between a man and a particular beast but a general relationship of a human being to cattle, an essential feature of which, I am about to suggest, is the sacramental equation of man and beast in sacrifice. Any ox will therefore serve the purpose, or, indeed, no ox at all—only the memory, or rather the idea, of an ox.

231 We may ask why the identification is with oxen and not with bulls. It might be expected that a man, who is himself a *tut*, a bull, not only in the general sense of 'male', but also in a common metaphor of speech derived expressly from cattle, would take his name from a bull rather than from an ox. The commonsense answer is that Nuer castrate all but a very few of their bulls, so that there would not be enough entire animals to go round, and this may be the right explanation. Even if it is not, or is not a sufficient explanation, we must here take it as given that the equation is between man and ox. We may, however, note further the fact, on which emphasis is later to be laid, that since an ox or a surrogate for an ox is almost always the sacrificial victim, the sacrificial equivalence is between men (the sacrificers) and oxen (the victims). If a beast is entire it is castrated before sacrifice. It is perhaps also necessary to remark that Nuer evaluation of bulls and oxen is not ours. Our representation of an ox, in contrast to a bull, is a docile, inferior, and slightly contemptible beast destined for the slaughter-house. In the Nuer representation a fat ox is a thing of grandeur and beauty. It is oxen which arouse their admiration. Bulls evoke utilitarian interest rather than emotional and aesthetic attention.

The facts I have related make it understandable that Professor Seligman should have spoken of 'identification' of men with their favourite oxen. Had he had either a first-hand or a wider knowledge of the Nuer he would no doubt have elaborated his theme, and especially by drawing on their ceremonies of initiation for illustrations.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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THE SACRIFICIAL ROLE OF CATTLE

A youth takes his cry and his personal name from the markings and other traits of the ox his father gives him at initiation. By the rites of initiation boys are made men,[1] and this means, among other things, a conspicuous change in their relation to the cattle. They now cease to look after the calves and sheep and goats and to perform the more menial services of kraal and byre. Instead they tend the adult cattle. The most marked change is that whereas before initiation they helped the women milk the cows they now altogether cease to milk. But these external and evident changes are accompanied by a deeper, and hidden, transformation, men and oxen being brought into an intimacy of relationship on a different plane to that of mere proximity and association, however close, so that in some way an equation is brought about between man and ox. Such would seem to be the interpretation of certain very peculiar, though outstanding, features of the initiation rites. I have described these rites and discussed their social significance elsewhere,[2] and in this place I shall only draw attention to those features which have special relevance to our immediate subject.

The rites direct our attention throughout to the relationship between men and cattle. It is the *wut ghok*, the man of the cattle, to which he stands in a special ritual relationship, who opens and closes the periods of initiation. During initiation the initiates may not have any contact with the cattle, which are a danger to them till their wounds are completely healed and they formally pass out of seclusion. The prohibition extends even to rubbing ashes of cattle-dung over their bodies, a daily practice common to all men and boys; and Dr. Mary Smith tells me that Nuer say that it may harm the lads if the smoke of the smudges reaches them; though the fact that they drink milk suggests that the interdiction really concerns their relation to the oxen rather than to cattle in general, just as the interdiction on women drinking milk during their periods concerns their relation to cows and not to cattle in general. In the terminal rite of initiation, when the initiates are

[1] Or, perhaps, one should rather say 'Nuer men', for Nuer do not regard other people as 'men', whatever their age. They think of *wut*, manhood, as something specifically Nuer. Consequently Dinka who have already been initiated in their own country have their foreheads cut in the Nuer fashion across the scars of their Dinka initiation if they become members of Nuer communities.

[2] 'The Nuer: Age-Sets', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1936. Since this article was written I have obtained further information which has not been published.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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PLATE XIII

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Ox with trained horn

[facing p. 256

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231 loosened (*lony rar*, the verb *lony* being that used for loosening
881 cattle from their tethering-pegs) they re-establish their contact with the cattle. They are pelted (smeared) by their seniors with cattle-dung (*buk ke war*). Then they wash in a stream. On their return to the homestead they beat the cattle with wild rice, and afterwards rub themselves with ashes of cattle-dung. They spend the rest of the day leaping and chanting behind the oxen given them by their fathers and possibly, if they are lucky, by their paternal and maternal uncles also, which are the first oxen they can call their own. The fact that after initiation there is an interdiction on men milking also seems to point to an opposition between women and cows on the one side and men and oxen on the other side and further to emphasize the equation of man and ox.

One might perhaps feel that one was attributing to the facts a symbolical significance which the evidence does not sustain were it not that further, and very striking, observations push one to the interpretation put forward. Thus, the name of the dances held at the initiation ceremonies is *ruath*, the word for a bull calf from the time it is weaned, that is to say a bull, normally destined to be an ox, which has broken with its dam in the same way as a youth at initiation cuts, as we would put it, the apron strings which before have tied him to his mother, especially in the matter of food, as some of the symbolism of the rites indicates. Further, between the cutting of the marks of manhood on a boy's forehead and his ceremonial emergence from seclusion (or exclusion from the normal life) he is known as *cot*, which appears to be the same word as that used for a hornless cow or ox. It is remarkable also that Nuer compare to the initiation of youths the cutting (*ngat*) of the horns of favourite oxen (they are entire animals at the time) so that they will grow against the cut at fancy angles, generally in a curve across the muzzle (*ma gut*). They say that the operation, which is performed before castration, is the *gar*, the cutting of the marks of manhood, on the young bulls. If the operation has not already been carried out before a father presents a young bull to his son at initiation it is likely to be one of the young man's first acts in the period immediately following his own initiation. I have noted earlier how soon after their initiation youths, if they can procure the metal, fasten bracelets up their left arms so tightly as to render them, for the time of

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231 their wearing, incapable of use, and that they also render useless
881 the left horns of their favourite oxen by deforming them.†

Human thought and expression are inevitably constructed out of man's experience of the world around him. There is nothing that should surprise us in Nuer speaking metaphorically of boys by the same word (*ruath*) as they use for young bulls and for the male young of other animals, and, by contrast, of men by the same word (*tut*) as they use for adult bulls and adult males of other animal species. It is natural—it would be remarkable were it not so—that Nuer use cattle metaphors in speech and gesture. Nevertheless, the evidence, some of which I have presented, suggests that there is more in it than that. Whether Professor Seligman's psychological use of the word 'identification' is correct is a question that lies outside my own competence and the scope of this book, but it cannot be denied that there is a moral identification, a participation imposed on the individual by his culture and inextricably bound up with religious values. When henceforward I speak of identification it is to be understood in this sense.

† [See p. 235, cat. 116, — Analyst]

II

231 We have noted that there is a personal side and a collective side
782 to Nuer religion and that we may speak of personal and collective
615 types of sacrifice. We have noted also that in the collective type the
614 officiant represents the whole clan, that the spear he holds in his hands is that of the ancestor of the clan, and that he invokes God as the God who created his ancestor and the God of his fathers. We have further noted that the sacrificial victim, although in fact it is an ox or a surrogate for an ox, is not spoken of as *thak*, ox, but as *yang*, cow, a general term referring to any bovine beast, with a plural form *ghok*, meaning 'cattle'. This suggests that the victim embodies the general idea of the equivalence of cattle and men in the sacrificial act, and there is certainly what we may speak of as a collective identification of clans and lineages with their herds. This is expressed in the honorific titles of clans and lineages. We have been discussing hitherto the equation of man with ox. These titles introduce us to the idea of an enduring relationship between a social group and its ancestral herd.

On the day when, by the cutting of lines on his forehead, a boy

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On the day when, by the cutting of lines on his forehead, a boy

881 becomes a man there is much rejoicing of his kinsfolk, and especially of his father and paternal kin. In talking to Nuer about this day they have impressed on me that what is uppermost in the minds of the older men, particularly at the initiation of an eldest son, is that the continuity of the family and lineage is now assured. Initiation is the threshold to marriage and the birth of sons who will remember their forebears; for as soon as the period of healing and seclusion is over the initiates embark on a full sex life leading to courtship, marriage, and begetting. An initiate is part of a lineage and clan and his initiation is seen in terms of its collective life. His new relationship with the cattle is then not only a personal one, important though that is, but the personal relationship is incorporated in a more general lineage one.

231 613 614 Nuer conceive of the ancestor of a clan, and likewise the ancestors of its component lineages, as having possessed a herd, the descendants of which have had, and continue to have, though distributed among different families, a constant relationship with the descendants of their original owners and are still thought of as one herd. This ancestral herd is a fiction, for the cattle are being constantly dispersed and replaced by others at marriages, but conceptually it is an enduring collectivity. There is ideally a constant attachment, the clan and its herd forming a joint community down the generations, so much so that a common, perhaps the commonest, explanation of a division in the clan is the fighting of bulls of the ancestors of the divided parts. The social cleavage is represented in tradition as a cleavage in the herd.

231 613 614 553 196 The unity of clans and lineages is symbolized in the names of the ancestral spears, which we have already discussed[1] and in honorific titles, chiefly derived from the names of cows. In both cases we are dealing with ideas and not actual things, with the idea of a clan spear handed down as an heirloom and with the idea of the present herds of the members of a clan being descended from the ancestral herd. Nuer say that '*mut kene paak jalke kel*', 'the spear and the honorific title go together'. If a man has a certain clan spear he must have one or more honorific titles which go with it. Both have come down together from *tuok nath*, the beginnings of the Nuer. The *paak*, a word found with the same meaning in some of the other Nilotic languages, may be described as an honorific title used as a mode of salutation or address. It is commonly used on ceremonial occasions, as on formal visits, at dances,

[1] [See pp. 240-47, Cab 118 (298) — Analyst]

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and at marriage and initiation ceremonies. Otherwise it is mostly a complimentary usage which expresses a formal relationship of reserve, as between a husband's mother and her son's wife, and then it is chiefly a woman's mode of address.

The title consists of *gat*, son (of), or *nya*, daughter (of), followed by a word which usually refers to a cow said to be that on whose milk the ancestor of the clan or lineage was nurtured in infancy, though it may refer to the place where the clan or lineage is said to have originated, or to some object connected with its ancestor, or to its totem. Nuer say that clans either *'ba paak ka kwi yangdien'*, 'are saluted by reference to their cow' or *'ba paak ka kwi ciengdien'*, 'are saluted by reference to their (original) village site', but since the salutation generally refers to a cow the expressions *'paak'*, 'honorific salutation', and *'paakene yang'*, 'honorific salutation of cow', are synonyms. The words are often exceedingly difficult to translate, or even to discover the meaning of, especially when they relate to cows, for here the Nuer language proliferates symbolism in luxuriant elaborations of fancy; and representations of ancestral cow, ancestral home, totem, and totemic spirit, are sometimes fused in the titles, which are built out of a number of residues all of which derive from and express lineage values. I have listed and discussed some of these honorific titles elsewhere,[1] and there is no need here for a detailed consideration of them. We have only to note the central place the idea of a cow has in them, the cow standing for the herd and hence also for the lineage of its masters.

It need not surprise us that it is a cow that is referred to and not an ox or bull. It would be inappropriate to refer to an ox since, as I understand the matter, the whole point of using a symbol from the herds is to express in a single representation the idea of the unity of a lineage and its cattle, the cattle which sustain the lineage by their milk (the cow suckles the ancestor) and by constant calving provide them with bridewealth for marriages whereby sons are born and the lineage continued, and with a means of maintaining communication with spirit and ghosts. Male animals do not answer the requirements of the symbolism. The great majority of the bulls are castrated, and, if not later disposed of in marriage, those which survive murrains are sacrificed; and the animals which are left entire are not thought of as being, like the

[1] 'The Nuer: Tribe and Clan', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1934, pp. 23–94.

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male members of a human lineage, a line of descent. In tracing back the lineage of a beast, which Nuer can sometimes do to several generations, they do so by the points of the dams and not the points of the sires: an ox of certain markings was born of a cow of certain markings and it of a cow of other markings. Descent in the herd is, so to speak, traced matrilineally; and it is the cows which are seen as the stable element, which calve cow-calves, which calve cow-calves in their turn, and so provide the constant and continuous nexus between herd and lineage. Consequently, if at marriage most of a herd is dispersed and only a core is retained, it is some cows which are kept so that the herd may be built up anew through them. Therefore, it is to the cows of the ancestors, and not to their bulls, that the honorific titles of clans and lineages refer.

The lineage-herd equation can thus be considered as a collective expression of the man-ox equation. The one does not derive from the other but they are parts of a single complex representation, which finds its most logical expression in the rites of sacrifice. The name of the ox of the speaker may be shouted out in sacrificial invocations because its name stands for his own, but when the sacrifice is on behalf of a whole clan the exordial words are the spear-name of the clan, which goes together with the cow-title of the clan, representing the relation of the clan to its ancestral herd. The two symbols, ox-name and spear-name, represent two aspects of the sacrificial relationship between men and cattle, the personal and the collective. The one or other aspect is emphasized according to the nature of the sacrifice.

III

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The facts we have examined, taken severally or together, point to the conclusion that there is the idea of equivalence between men and cattle, and the only plane on which there is anything that can be called equivalence is that on which men and cattle are things of the same order, so that one can be substituted for the other, namely in sacrifice, or in other words in relation to God. We have seen that in those sacrifices which have the most significance for the study of Nuer religion, the personal ones, the lives of oxen are substituted for the lives of men. This is not only evident in what

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Nuer say but is indicated also in the rites themselves, and especially in the rite of consecration. In discussing this rite I speak for the present only of personal sacrifice.

When ashes are rubbed on the back of an animal in giving it to a spirit I speak of the act as one of dedication. When they are rubbed on its back in sacrifice I speak of it as consecration. It is useful to make this distinction for several reasons. Animals are not dedicated to God except on rare occasions when sacrifice is to take place shortly afterwards, but they are consecrated to him in sacrifice. Cows are the animals usually dedicated to spirits, whereas it is oxen which are sacrificed. Though even a cow dedicated to a spirit may ultimately be sacrificed and at least one of its male calves is destined for sacrifice, sacrifice does not follow dedication, if at all, for months or even years after the dedication. What is devoted by dedication to a spirit is the animal and its milk, but when ashes are rubbed on the back of a beast at sacrifice what is devoted is its life. That there is a difference of meaning between the two acts is shown by the fact that an animal which has been dedicated to a spirit by ashes being rubbed on its back has ashes again rubbed on it when it is sacrificed to that spirit. It is—if we care to use these terms—dedicated to the spirit in the first act and consecrated for sacrifice to it in the second. The difference is that the rubbing of ashes in dedicating an animal to a spirit is the sign and the manner of its passing out of man's possession (though in fact he does not part with it) into a spirit's possession, whereas the rubbing of ashes in consecrating an animal for sacrifice is a substitution of life of man for life of beast and hence also an identification of man with beast, sacrificer with victim.

It will be remembered that in sacrifice the animal is consecrated with ashes, has an invocation spoken over it, and is speared. I have already discussed the *laws* of invocation. What concerns us now is the *link*, the consecration. This word, which in other Nilotic languages has the sense of 'to smear' and sometimes of 'to sacrifice', means in Nuer 'to rub' or 'to smear' and generally 'to rub with ashes'. In a sacrificial context it describes the placing, and usually lightly rubbing, of ashes on the victim's back. It is clear that it is a rite of consecration, the animal's life being thereby devoted to God; but also in the persons and piacular sacrifices it is, as we have seen, sanctified for sacrifice in substitution for the life of a man. It would seem, therefore, that the laying of the right

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hand on the animal's back identifies the man who lays it, or the person on whose behalf he is acting, with the beast, the right hand standing, as we have earlier noted, for the whole person. If this is so, then it is himself, or the person for whom he is proxy, that the officiant offers up; or, to put it in another way, in the act of consecration the representations of man and ox, of sacrificer and victim, are fused.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that when ashes are ritually rubbed on persons the meaning which fits the action best is unity, solidarity, or identification, the expression of the idea of 'I am with you', as when, for example, before initiation a boy's father, maternal uncle, and family's master of ceremonies rub (*buk*) his forehead with ashes, uttering an invocation, or when a man returns from a long journey and his father rubs ashes on his forehead. It is confirmed by two other observations. As we have noted, there is no laying of hands on cattle sacrificed at mortuary ceremonies, nor is there, Dr. Smith tells me, in sacrifices at *colwic* ceremonies. They are given to God, but the person on whose behalf they are sacrificed is dead. Also, cattle slain for reasons other than for sacrifice may have an invocation said over them but there is no laying on of hands.

I discuss this question again later in relation to the whole rite of sacrifice and the various theoretical interpretations of it which students have put forward. We may here note further, however, that the fact that it is ash which is placed on the back of the victim and not something else and that this ash must be that of cattle-dung (*pou*) and not wood-ash (*ngeth*) may be significant, for the ash is taken from the *gol*, the household smudge which symbolizes for Nuer the home in various senses. *Gol* means primarily the home in a domestic sense. It is identified with the father of a family, *gol* so-and-so being the 'home' of that man and hence his 'family' also. But it can also be used for the lineage, 'the family' in that wider sense. The ash comes from the *gol* which represents the family or the lineage, and the officiant who places it on the animal's back represents, according to the type of sacrifice, either the members of the family or the members of the lineage.

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IV

It may be asked how the fact that in piacular sacrifice an ox is substituted for a man affects the general relationship of men to cattle. The answer is that all cattle are reserved for sacrifice. It is not just that in a particular ceremony a particular ox stands for a particular man. The equivalence is a general one between men and cattle. Some caution is necessary here. Nuer are very fond of meat, and whether an animal is killed in sacrifice or dies a natural death its flesh is eaten. All cattle, sheep, and goats, except those sacrificed in holocausts, eventually go into the pot. Also, it is very noticeable that on ceremonial occasions which are not also occasions of calamity, most people show more interest in the festal than in other aspects of the ceremonies. People show their desire for meat without reserve and it is the festal character of sacrifices which gives them much of their significance in the life of the Nuer. This is perhaps most noticeable at weddings, when, moreover, those who get the flesh are not those who sacrifice the animal; and also on those occasions when men scramble for meat. Further, Nuer themselves recognize that some men are too eager to sacrifice an ox, sheep, or goat on the slightest excuse, a craving for meat rather than a pressing need for spiritual aid being the incentive for sacrifice. It is undoubtedly true that it is sometimes craving for meat which reminds a man that sacrifice to some spirit is long overdue, religious obligations providing a ready excuse for a feast. However, the fact that Nuer accuse men of making unnecessary sacrifices to have feasts of meat in itself shows that animals should not be slaughtered except in sacrifice; and there is indeed a very strong feeling, amounting to a moral injunction, that domestic animals—sheep and goats as well as cattle—must not be slaughtered except in sacrifice and, save in very special circumstances, they are never slaughtered for food, a fact noted by Ernst Marno nearly a century ago.[1] This injunction explains why Nuer are not expected to, and do not, provide meat for guests, and also why I was unable to buy beasts from them for food for my own household.

[1] Op. cit., p. 348. The Dinka likewise do not slaughter cattle for food (see that curious book *The Ethiopic Valley*, n.d., pp. 10 and 39, by Hamdhill Masha Kathiok, a Dinka convert to Christianity). This is the case among many African pastoral peoples.

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THE SACRIFICIAL ROLE OF CATTLE

231 731 261 The very special circumstances in which cattle are killed for food are times of severe famine and in what are called *nak*, or in some parts of Nuerland *kanar* or *cuel*, camps. Within my own short experience, in 1931, a year of great hunger, the Lou Nuer killed many oxen for food, and during a famine in western Nuerland in 1935 a great number of beasts were slaughtered to keep the people alive. Dr. Howell says that in the Zeraf valley in 1943, likewise a year of famine, animals were being killed for food.[1] The Lou Nuer even have a reputation, of which they are ashamed, for killing oxen when hungry, for not waiting, that is, till faced with starvation. How often this situation used to occur is not, and cannot, be known. If it is not altogether a modern phenomenon, we may suppose that it was much less likely to have arisen before rinderpest depleted the herds and imposed peace prevented their rehabilitation through raiding, the milk supply thus being lessened.[2] *Nak* camps are presumably so called because they are 231 881 formed for the express purpose of killing (*nak*) oxen. They are formed in some years only, in the rains or at the commencement of the dry season, by youths, each of whom takes an ox to the camp where one by one they are slaughtered and the young men gorge themselves on their flesh. Now that cattle have become scarcer two youths may share a single animal, though it is still thought that there ought to be an ox to a man. There is some doubt about the precise significance of this custom. When I published an account of the Nuer age-set system[3] I considered that it did not form an integral part of the rites of initiation but was only incidentally connected with them. I may have been wrong in this conclusion, and my own later researches revealed features which incline me to accept Dr. Howell's contention that they are connected with the age-set system.[4] Certainly there is more in the *nak* than merely killing oxen for feasting. That it has a ritual significance is clear from the fact that the youths who take part in it are segregated. Girls are not allowed to enter, or at any rate to sleep [834] in, the camps. Abstinence is imposed at a time when the company of girls and their favours are a Nuer's chief interest. Nor may the

[1] P. P. Howell, 'The Age-Set System and the Institution of "Nak" among the Nuer' (with a Note by E. E. Evans-Pritchard), *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1948, p. 180. I was told that on raids on the Dinka pillaged oxen were slaughtered for food.

[2] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, pp. 19–20.

[3] 'The Nuer: Age-Sets', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1936.

[4] P. P. Howell, *ibid.*

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young men attend dances, which therefore do not take place at this time. Also, they may have no contact of any kind with the herds other than with the oxen with which they are segregated. It is to be noted further that the borrowing from kin and neighbours of oxen for slaughter by youths whose families are unable to provide them with suitable animals is no ordinary loan but is of a peculiar and ritual character. The owner of a beast who is asked for it by a youth may not refuse the request, and not only for social reasons but also, says Dr. Howell, because 'he would run the risk of spiritual contamination resulting in sickness or even death among the members of his family'.[1] Nor may he demand repayment for some years. These facts considered in the light of the great reluctance, to say the least of it, of Nuer to kill an ox other than for sacrifice suggest strongly that a slaughter on this scale has some religious significance. I asked Dr. Lienhardt and Dr. Smith to inquire about this matter. The former informs me that an old man makes an invocation over one of the oxen, which stands for all of them, and the latter that the older men who have contributed the beasts make invocations over them, though they do not consecrate them with ashes. It would seem, therefore, that if their slaughter is not a proper sacrifice it has to some extent a sacrificial character. It is significant also that not only is the killing obligatory but also that each youth ought to provide an ox for slaughter, an ox for a man, for we seem to have here again the equivalence of a man with an ox, which is the basis of piacular sacrifice: and it can easily be seen that the death of an ox at the termination of the rites of initiation would be a sacramental act appropriate to the whole setting of initiation.

Except on those rare occasions when dire necessity or custom compels them to do so, Nuer do not kill cattle except in sacrifice; and it is regarded as a fault to kill them *'bang lora'*, 'just for nothing', the Nuer way of saying that they ought not to be killed for meat. This is clearly shown, apart from the facts I have already instanced, by the statement that an ox slain simply from desire for meat may *cien*, take ghostly vengeance on, its slayer, for it has *cuong*, right, in the matter. Maybe Nuer do not take this very seriously, but that they say it at all is an indication of how they regard the matter, for, as we have seen, they fear ghostly vengeance and hold that it operates only because God is permissive,

[1] Ibid., p. 176.

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231 782 784 seeing that an injustice has been done. The man had no right to take the life of the ox and by doing so he committed a fault. In sacrificial invocations Nuer explain to God why the life of the ox is being taken, and they may also address the ox and tell it why it is being killed—not that they think it understands. They are justifying themselves in taking its life.

231 731 782 Consequently I was not surprised to learn from Dr. Mary Smith, whom I asked to inquire into the question, that when cattle are killed in time of famine Nuer, though they do not consecrate the beasts, may make an invocation over them asking God that 'the meat may be soft in their stomachs and not bring them sickness'. This does not constitute sacrifice, there being no sacrificial intention, but it shows that there is a feeling of guilt about killing animals for food even when hunger compels it, and we can say that all cattle, and also sheep and goats, are reserved, or set apart, for sacrifice and their lives should not be taken, except in the special circumstances I have mentioned, for any other purpose. In that sense we may speak of cattle as being 'sacred'. If we do so, however, we must note that they are not sacrificed because they are regarded as sacred intrinsically, or for reasons extraneous to the sacrificial situation, but, on the contrary, they are regarded as sacred only because they are reserved for sacrifice and in the sense defined by that purpose. I have discussed beasts of the herd only and not those of the flock because, as we have noted earlier, in sacrifices they are 'cattle', surrogates for oxen. It is pre-eminently their role to play the victim's part in sacrifice and they are consequently also reserved for sacrifice, but the sacrificial equivalence is always between *ran* and *yang*, man and 'cow', never between man and sheep or goat, for even when it is a sheep or goat which is being killed the ideal equivalence is preserved in speech.

231 [262] 224 In order that the sacrificial killing of beasts of the flocks and herds may be seen in a wider setting both of the taking of lives of creatures and of the eating of flesh, it should be realized that, except for fish, Nuer seldom kill wild creatures but rely almost entirely on the flesh of their domesticated animals for meat. For religious reasons they are averse to killing birds, except occasionally the ostrich, to which the same symbolism does not attach, for its feathers; and also reptiles, except the turtle and the crocodile (perhaps occasionally the monitor lizard). But even where there is no objection to killing animals, as in the case of mammals, Nuer

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seldom go out of their way to kill them. They do not go out to hunt lions, leopards, and hyenas, unless they molest the flocks and herds, and usually they only pursue those graminivorous animals which come to drink near their camps and seem to offer themselves for slaughter. It is not that it is thought to be wrong to kill them, but that except in time of famine, Nuer are little interested in hunting. They speak of it as a Shilluk and Dinka practice beneath the serious attention of a Nuer who can boast of a herd—as a pursuit, that is, of foreigners or of men without cattle. Even those who deliberately set out to hunt elephants and giraffe do so less to obtain meat than to acquire ivory and hair which can be exchanged for cattle, sheep, and goats. This lack of interest in hunting may be due to the fact that their flocks and herds supply them, through sacrifice, with meat and to the nature of their country which renders hunting difficult, but, whatever the reason, they are not interested, so that any killing of animals outside sacrifice is rare; and we may here say again, as has been said before in a rather different context, that the Nuer mind is turned inwards towards his own society of men and cattle. He is not unobservant of nature but he sees it with a contemplative and not with a predatory eye that seeks to destroy and exploit. He sees wild creatures as something in their own right, and his disposition is to live and let live. His folk-stories reflect this attitude and the feeling that killing, like death, is something which has come about almost by accident and is not in the original nature of things.

A large part of Nuer folk-lore consists of stories about animals.[1] There are stories about ogres; a cycle of adventure stories about how cunning fox tricked hyena; many just-so stories which tell why hyenas limp, why plovers have thin legs, why guinea-fowl crouch, why millepedes are blind, why cows have no upper incisors, and so forth; and stories of yet other sorts. God sometimes figures in these stories as a judge in a way which appeals to the Nuer sense of humour as well as to our own. For example, fish, finding that they were visible to man in the water and hence easily speared, appealed to God who let them be invisible. God sometimes figures

[1] I have not published the folk-stories I collected among the Nuer. Some of those given by Miss Huffman (*Nuer Customs and Folk-Lore*, 1931, pp. 88–104) show Anuak influence. Those recorded by Capt. V. H. Fergusson ('Nuer Beast Tales', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1924) have Nuer themes but may be Atwot, or even Mandari, versions of them, for *rill*, the jackal, and *ijong*, the hawk, are two main figures in them, and these are not Nuer words.

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him how to pound millet so that he now satisfies his hunger only by ceaseless labour. The sexual organs attached themselves to man and woman so that they are now constantly desirous of each other. Mouse taught man how to beget and woman how to bear. Dog brought fire to man. And we are told that while fox was plotting to sow dissension among the beasts he gave man the spear and taught him how to use it. It was then that man began to kill, and his first killing seems to have been that of the mother of cow and buffalo, or rather the mother of cattle, for at that time cows and buffaloes were the same. This led to a feud between men and cattle, buffaloes avenging their mother by attacking men in the bush and cows by causing men to quarrel and slay one another.

It may perhaps sharpen our focus on sacrifice to know not only that Nuer seldom kill wild animals but also that they can imagine a state in which man did not kill, that there might have been a beginning to killing as to coitus, to pounding grain, and to other things men do now. Viewed in relation to the dialectic of the stories, the killing of cattle is then seen not to be, as it were, derived from a state of nature in which men kill animals for food, as just one sort of killing among others, but as a product of a new dispensation in which cattle are allotted a sacrificial role and are set apart for this purpose. Other animals may, as a matter more or less of chance, and now and again, be killed, but it is the role and destiny of cattle to be slaughtered in sacrifice. Sacrificial slaughter thus stands at the very centre of the idea of killing, and sacrificial flesh at the very centre of the idea of feasting.

We may conclude, therefore, that the observations we have made earlier concerning the relationship of a man with his favourite ox, the ritual of initiation, &c., must be viewed in the light of the identification of men with cattle in sacrifices. A Nuer does not look upon his cattle as a stockbreeder or dairy farmer does, for in his case his relationship to his beasts is complicated, apart from their use in marriage, by their reservation for sacrifice. And it is not just that he must not kill cattle except in sacrifice because if he were to slaughter them for meat he would lower his resources for food, marriage, and religious purposes. It is not merely a negative injunction. It is not 'thou must not kill' but 'thou must sacrifice'. It is not that they must only kill for sacrifice but that they must sacrifice to kill.

We must not be led astray by this conclusion to suppose that in

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We must not be led astray by this conclusion to suppose that on

the everyday life of the Nuer they think of and treat their animals in a 'religious' manner. They do not even treat those dedicated to spirits in any special way. Ordinarily Nuer think of their beasts from the practical point of view of herdsmen who are largely dependent on them for food and are dependent on them entirely for marriage. But if it would be a mistake to leave out of consideration the practical uses of cattle it would be no less a mistake were we to ignore the religious significance they have for Nuer. This is easier to do for two reasons. Firstly, because Nuer are themselves reticent in speaking of their cattle in this connexion. They tend to be reserved in discussing religious matters, and it may even be said that a certain secrecy adheres to them; and those whom a European tends to know best, the younger men, have less awareness of the sacramental role of cattle than the older people. Secondly, because we have no direct experience of our own which associates animals with anything similar in our culture. We are, therefore, inclined to reason that cattle have ritual significance because they have great practical value. If this were really so the cow, and not the ox, would be the object of identification, but, apart from that consideration, an attempt to interpret the religious importance of cattle on this one-way track of reasoning changes the whole character of the relationship between men and cattle. It makes the animals themselves to be in some way the object of religious attention, and nothing could be farther from the truth.

The religious significance of cattle is of a very different kind. Cattle are necessary to Nuer not only for food and marriage but also for salvation, for the sanctification of their social undertakings and for overcoming evil in its twofold character of sickness and sin. As Professor Westermann's text has it, 'she (the cow) was ordered (by God) for the deliverance of souls'.[1] This soteriological function pertains to cattle as much as their economic, bridewealth, and other functions. It is not just that in Nuer sacrifices something that for other reasons is valuable obtains through its consecration and sacramental death a religious significance, which would consequently be secondary and momentarily derived from the immediate sacrificial act. The sacrificial role is always dormant in cattle, which in sacrifice are being used for an ordained purpose for which they are set apart. This is why the rubbing of ashes on an ox's

[1] Or, as I have translated the passage (p. 224): 'It [the cow] has been decreed for the life [of man].'

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back while uttering some short prayer or invocation is a rite which can at any time be performed. The animal, even when not dedicated to a spirit, is already destined for sacrifice. The sacrificial situation is present, as it were, in the act, though no actual sacrifice is made. 281 782

When, therefore, we seek to estimate what their cattle are to Nuer and how they see them, we have to recognize that they are the means by which men can enter into communication with God, that they are, as Father Crazzolara puts it, 'the link between the perceptible and the transcendental'.[1] In fulfilling this role, his cattle shield a man and his family from disaster, and he conceives of them also collectively as a herd which from the beginning of time has helped his fathers in distress, performing in each generation the same sacrificial service. In the time of the ancestor of his clan the 'cow' gave her life for his salvation and so it is today. Whence springs the identification of man with ox, of lineage with herd, and of men with cattle. 281 782 771

[1] J. P. Crazzolara, 'Die Bedeutung des Rindes bei den Nuer', *Africa*, 1934, p. 390.

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793 628 distinctive role is that which he plays in homicide, that is to say, when two social groups, groups of kin and local and political groups, are in a state of violent opposition to each other and the whole community is involved in consequence, directly or indirectly, in a state of interdiction. He functions as administrator of oaths in a similar setting. The oaths either arise out of homicide or concern matters which may result in homicide. There are strong feelings of hostility between the parties; otherwise oaths, with their terrible consequences, would not be taken. Serious incest may provoke similar feelings, because, Nuer ideas about incest being what they are, the persons concerned in it may belong to different descent groups and, indeed, are for various reasons likely to do so. In situations of *nuer* in which hostile feelings are not aroused, as when twins are born or a person is killed by lightning, the head of the family or its master of ceremonies officiates. These are family and lineage affairs. So, whereas the *guan buthni* acts in sacrifice on behalf of an exclusive social group, the leopard-skin priest for the most part performs sacrifices in situations in which two groups are opposed to one another and which therefore require a person unidentified by lineage attachment to either to act on behalf of the whole community. The priest thus has a central position in the social structure rather than in religious thought, for his priestly functions are exclusive not because, on account of the sanctity of his office, only he can perform sacrifices, but because representatives of neither party to a dispute can effectively act in the circumstances obtaining. As he entirely lacks any real political authority or powers it is understandable that he could not carry out his functions unless during their performance his person was sacrosanct. The presence of a priesthood adds nothing to the dominant ideas of Nuer religion. It is rather these ideas which give to a political role its necessary attributes. Put in another way, the Nuer have priests who perform certain politico-religious functions but their religion is not intrinsically a priestly religion.

613 793 231 Another hereditary and traditional functionary is the *wut ghok*, the man of the cattle, sometimes also spoken of as *kuaar ghok*, the 'priest' of the cattle, or *ring ghok*, the 'virtue' (literally, 'flesh') of the cattle. There are men of the cattle in every tribe and tribal section, and they belong to lineages of a number of different clans, all those I have come across being of true Nuer descent. As in the

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case of the leopard-skin priestly lineages, any member of a lineage of men of the cattle can perform the services attached to that office, but in practice only some, and senior, persons would normally be called upon to do so. These services have less religious and social importance than those of the *kuaar muon*, and a man of the cattle is not by virtue of his office a person of social importance. One hears of him chiefly in connexion with his ability to perform rites to cure sick beasts and to make barren cows fertile, usually by spitting on grass and beating the animal's back with it while asking God to make the beasts well or fertile. In times of murrain he may sacrifice an ox to God. I was told that after consecrating it he would speak in this vein: 'What, God? Take this ox, it is thine. Thou art master of the world, the world is thine and it is thine affair alone. What, God? Do not kill all the cattle. What will our children eat? No one will live. Oh God, take thy cow and spare a portion of the herds. God, I am a man of the cattle and I have come to sacrifice this beast; take it, it is thine.' Nuer say that he addresses '*kwothde*', 'his spirit', that is Spirit as figured in relation to his office, the God of his fathers. He may also on raids lash a tethering-cord in the direction of enemy herds to ensure booty. He may be consulted about the time of moving to dry-season camps. He is said to sprinkle people with milk in time of sickness, and at his own mortuary ceremony his kinsmen and possessions are aspersed with milk. He is buried in fresh cattle manure. He cannot accept cattle in compensation for adultery with his wife. His curse can cause cattle to die and a man to have diarrhoea if he drinks milk. All these customs and notions give him that mystical association with cattle which is indicated by his title and also by his badge of office, a circle or two of tethering-cord round his neck.

As I have explained earlier (pp. 255–6), initiation of boys to manhood is intimately bound up with their relation to the cattle. It is therefore appropriate that it should be a man of the cattle who in each tribe determines when a new age-set should commence and when it should close, performs sacrifices to open and close the periods of initiation, and names the sets; and this is the most important public function of any man of the cattle. We see here again how, as in the cases of the masters of ceremonies and the leopard-skin priests, the chief religious function of men of the cattle, their formal sacrificial and ceremonial role, is concerned with group activities. In their case the activities are relations